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LOST VOICES IN THE POETRY OF CATULLUS:

A STUDY IN PERSONA AND POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims at recovering aspects of the poetry of Catullus often denied or ignored by critics: the roles of the poet himself, and of politics in his poetry. These I call the ‘lost voices’. The first voice is that of the poet as opposed to a fictional *persona* called ‘Catullus’. Taking the poet’s I to refer back to himself re-establishes the poet’s role in understanding the meaning of the poems, and also raises the related question of how we should interpret the numerous biographical references Catullus makes. In exploring the history of the intrusion of poets into their verses I demonstrate the likelihood that Catullus wrote for an audience who would take his poetry as referring to his own life, unless he directed them otherwise.

I then argue for Catullus’ strong political involvement as being a key feature of a considerable number of his poems. I explore first the particularly personal nature of Roman politics and how for many élite Roman men politics was a way of life not a career choice. In examining what we can discover of Catullus’ own status and position in society, I show how he should be considered very much part of the Roman élite. As such, politics is a factor that cannot be dismissed in his relationship with Lesbia (Clodia), particularly in his use of the concept of *amicitia*, and I re-examine the traditional identification of Lesbia with Clodia Metelli, arguing that such a partnership adds another dimension to Catullus’ poems as well as his political involvement. I conclude with examining the numerous poems that reflect Catullus’ explicit political activity, focusing on his relationship with the key political protagonists of his day, Caesar and Pompey, as well as other major figures, such as Clodius, Cicero, Vatinius, Piso, and Memmius.

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INTRODUCTION

Gaius – or Quintus – Valerius Catullus was a poet writing in the first century BC, with several poems dating to the fifties, a decade not only of great change, but also of fierce political rivalry as heavyweights such as Cicero, Pompey, and Julius Caesar fought for political influence and authority.¹ Our primary historical sources for the period include the contemporary evidence of Cicero (letters, speeches and other works), of Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* and Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*. In addition we have the testimony of later authors such as Livy (whose lost books on this period are summarized in the *Periochae*), Suetonius, Appian, Plutarch, and Dio Cassius.² Catullus himself contributes to the historical record through several poems that either vilify in the strongest language the actions of Caesar, Caesar's colleague Mamurra, and Pompey, or attest to the great prestige that these men won through their conquests and building projects.

Catullus is also famous as a love poet, apparently recording through a cycle of poems the trials and tribulations of his love affair with Lesbia. She is generally identified as Clodia, a sister of a certain Publius Clodius Pulcher, who was arguably a key representative of Caesar while he battled in Gaul during his long provincial command from 58 to 49 BC.³ Cicero attacked in court at least two of Clodius' sisters; surviving is his speech relating to the wife of Metellus Celer. If this is Catullus' Clodia, we would then have a contemporary account of her character, however fictionalised for Cicero's legal purposes. Unfortunately, Cicero's letters that may have mentioned the up-and-coming poet himself do not survive. We are left with enigmatic glimpses of a man, young, intelligent, very well educated, apparently dividing time between the great Roman metropolis and his prosperous hometowns in Cisalpine Gaul. His circle of friends and acquaintances included several who have also survived the oblivion of time, such as Calvus, Hortensius, and

Pollio, as well as several who only survive as names in his poetry, such as Juventius, Aurelius, Veranius and Fabullus.

Catullus continues to attract much scholarly attention, but the nature of the evidence concerning his poems rarely allows definitive conclusions to be reached on the many critical questions. Changes in methodological approach tend to shift emphasis rather than cover new ground. Likewise, this study may be seen to go backwards rather than forwards as it re-examines premises rejected by the New Critics in that one of the lost voices that it aims to rediscover in the works of Catullus is that of Catullus' own voice. At risk of subscribing to the biographical fallacy which informed earlier twentieth-century criticism, I seek Catullus' own voice rather than a created narrator 'Catullus'. In the first chapter, I explore the arguments for interpreting whether self-address refers to Catullus the poet or to an invented character, 'Catullus', and for the possibility that spontaneity is not automatically ruled out by the composition process.

Moving more openly into less travelled ground I seek to discover a voice of political comment within the poems, a voice that has long been denied by critics with a confidence rarely justified in Catullan studies.⁴ My inspiration for considering the political element of Catullus was Suetonius' comment on the effect of Catullus' verse on Caesar: 'Valerius Catullus had also libelled him in his verses about Mamurra, yet Caesar, while admitting that these were a permanent blot on his name, accepted Catullus' apology...and never interrupted his friendship with Catullus' father.'⁵ Not only does this comment give a clear indication of the efficacy of Catullus' attacks on major political figures, but it also challenges the view that Catullus was a provincial love poet on the periphery of political life at Rome. It raises questions about how and why Catullus' poetry had such an effect on a man like Caesar, and what was Catullus doing, having an affair with the sister of Caesar's

part-time ally, Clodius Pulcher? An after-dinner speech given by Alastair Campbell in 2002 added focus to these questions, when he spoke of the deliberate and highly orchestrated use of the media, in particular the press, in New Labour's bid for credibility and electoral success. While political parties had used the press before, what was new was the degree of sophistication and planning in exploiting John Major's moralistic Back to Basics campaign, which allowed British politics to be fought on a personal, moral front, in a combative atmosphere in which charges of adulterous relationships led to political death. Was Catullus using invective poetry with a similar political spin?

Before these questions can be answered, some context of the political circumstances in which he operated needs to be set; in the second half of this introduction, I define my interpretation of what politics meant to Romans contemporary with Catullus and in chapter 2, I examine when Catullus was writing, the possible dates for key poems, and what else can be ascertained about his life, rank and family background. Chapter 3 then considers the role of politics in his love poetry, including his use of invective. I assess the status of his love affair with Lesbia not only in relation to his other sexual relationships, but also his other interests. In addition, I re-examine the relationship between Catullus and Clodia Metelli for its political significance. Chapter 4 continues the political theme, considering the overtly political poems against Caesar and other notable figures, examining Catullus' methods and motivations. Less overtly political poems are then considered, such as poem lxiv with its Pharsalian background. I conclude with an analysis of the contributions made by this study towards answering the question to what extent Catullus influenced and was influenced by Roman Republican politics in the mid-first Century BC.

Having briefly introduced my subject, I now turn to methodology.

DEFINING THE VOICE OF CRITICISM

*It will be generally admitted that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is the most sublime noise that ever penetrated into the ear of man. All sorts and conditions are satisfied by it. Whether you are like Mrs Munt, and tap surreptitiously when the tunes come...or like Helen, who can see heroes and shipwrecks in the music's flood;or like Margaret, who can only see the music;or like Tibby, who is profoundly versed in counterpoint, and holds the full score open on his knee;or like their cousin, Fräulein Mosebach's young man, who can remember nothing but Fräulein Mosebach.*⁶

Methodology is intimately linked to our appreciation of the aesthetics of art forms and what is important to us and what we consider relevant to that art form. Forster's family group all react and respond very differently to a musical symphony, and this diversity of approach and response is true for other art forms. If a group of friends go to an art exhibition and see a picture of the mother of the artist whom they know, their range of responses will reflect their aesthetic sympathies.

‘Disgusting, he shouldn’t be allowed to do that to his mother’ says the first.

‘I certainly don’t think she should be so purple,’ replies his friend.

‘What you think is irrelevant’ responds another. ‘It’s what it means to the artist that matters.’

‘That’s where you’re wrong,’ retorts the fourth, turning to the first. ‘It’s all about shock tactics; you’ve reacted exactly as he intended.’

The four friends, like the Schlegel family, raise several questions about what is important in discussing an art form: Do we consider cultural codes important? What importance does accurate representation of life play? What is the role between the artist, his intended artwork, the physical artwork and the audience?

When I read the poems of Catullus, my aesthetic interest centres on what the poet is trying to say to his reader and how he does it. That reader is not me, however, and my glimpse of the text is very much over their shoulder. The reader is a stranger, wearing

clothes that I recognise, but would never wear today, using a language I can read but not speak. The world of that reader exists still around me; as foundations of my language and culture as well as physically integrated into the foundations of buildings standing today.

To appreciate what Catullus might be saying, I have to understand as much as I can of his environment, his culture and his own particular slant on this world. If he mentions someone in the poems, I want to know who this person was and what they were like to understand what their relationship with the poet might have been. If he mentions a country, I want to know its background and relationship to Rome. Where he uses words with special meanings, I want to know what these meanings might be, where else he uses them, and how these words connect with each other. Often the answers are not there, or are only tentative suggestions. As my contextualist approach is integral to my appreciation of the aesthetics of Catullus' verse, I have to make do with what we have. Other critics with other aesthetics may choose different routes, and these are equally valid and can be highly illuminating to my own study where points of interest overlap.

In considering the voice of Catullus the poet within his poems, and how Catullus the poet links to the character 'Catullus' in the poems, I have no desire to reconstruct a chronological biography of the poet. I am fully in sympathy with the formalist and New Critical⁷ approaches that elucidating the poetry is our key focus, and where we may assume that the larger context is irrelevant we can concentrate wholly on the poem. There are, however, many poems of Catullus where the compartmentalism of literary and historical criticism is unhelpful. As Fredricksmeyer argues: 'A full understanding and appreciation may require a knowledge of the larger background from which they came, i.e., their terms of reference, be it the occasion that gave rise to them, their position among other poems in the collection or the literary tradition, and the biographical, literary, political, social, and

ethical realities, values and beliefs which constitute, as it were, their ambience.’⁸ In these cases, as Galinsky says: ‘Recovering an author’s meaning or, more broadly, historical or social context or ‘horizon’ is an essential task for the critic.’⁹

Of course, when studying a poet from the ancient world, we can never have access to all the contexts necessary to reach irrefutable ‘truths’ on all matters, and speaking of the reasons for and emotions within a poem is fraught with problems.¹⁰ Nevertheless, to use the words of Griffin: ‘The aim is not to reconstruct the *vie passionelle* of the poet, but to discover the setting and the tone in which he means his poems to be read.’¹¹ Therefore, the closer we can get to an idea of the knowledge and possible reaction(s) of his original audience(s), the closer we will be to understanding how he may have expected his audience(s) to read his poems, although always accepting that this may not always have been the same as his original intention (conscious or sub-conscious).¹² It is also a matter of reading what is there before us; Catullus included biographical details for a purpose that should not be ignored in our criticism. He also includes incidental information that can reveal when a poem was written or where it is set.

A key consideration in my approach to Catullus, therefore, is that while we may not understand tone, subject matter or the subtleties of irony, much of this would be immediately obvious to Catullus’ contemporaries, either through common knowledge or simply through the style of delivery (for example, tone of voice and facial expression) or of performance (for example, the seductive message apparent in Marilyn Monroe’s birthday greeting to President Kennedy). As Von Albrecht says in his discussion of Ovid: ‘Sometimes we tend to forget that Roman authors did not write for some anonymous public but for real people they knew.’¹³ Our pleasure in reading Catullus need not be impaired by this emphasis on the ancient reader; we can enjoy Gilbert’s original libretto in a production

of *The Mikado* without being Victorian and often simply by being aware that humour has been present, even if not accessible to us. While the acknowledged difficulties may appear to put in doubt whether much of worth will result from such an approach, there is much that can be discerned about the reading habits of Catullus' contemporaries that can allow us to understand something of how Catullus might expect at least some of his audience to react, a reaction which is sufficiently different to our own reading habits to justify analysis and prevent anachronistic assumptions being made.

The apparent familiarity of Catullus' world should not fool us, as Wiseman has made clear in his discussion of Catullus' social world.¹⁴ The universality of love does not extend to universality of the institution and purpose of marriage, for example. Part of understanding Catullus, is, paradoxically, to understand how little we understand him, to 'defamiliarise' him. Studying his cultural and historical context in general and making full use of incidental and deliberate references in the poems to the world about him are important aspects of getting close to his original meaning. It allows us to understand more fully his use of such concepts as *fides* (loyalty), the status of the men he attacks with the risks he took in doing so, and his conformity or otherwise to established gender codes.

Where a poem is clearly part of a cycle, it is also important to read it within that context as well as with reference to the collection as a whole. This is especially true if we wish to understand Catullus' relationships with the various protagonists of the poems, his specialised vocabulary including words such as *lepor*, *deliciae*, and *doctus*, which Krostenko refers to as the 'language of social performance'¹⁵ and his conceptual writing, for example his adaptation of the Roman institution of *amicitia*. In one way, this approach is not so applicable to earlier poets; Catullus' cycle of love poems to Lesbia was an innovation not seen in earlier Greek or Latin poetry. Verbal and conceptual connections

across the collection as a whole can also shed light on individual poems; the protagonists of poem xi link that poem to others involving Lesbia, Furius, Aurelius and Caesar, the flower imagery links it to poem lxii, the singing contest between the girls and the boys about marriage as opposed to this 'divorce', and the castration image to poem lxiii, another failed 'marriage' resulting in enervated males. These links can be essential to understanding Catullus' tone and use of irony, whether we believe that Catullus speaks as himself or through a construct 'Catullus.'

My approach is also very much dictated by my subject of investigating Catullus' contemporary political scene and ideology, his impact on it and vice versa. In considering the mutual interdependency between Catullus' poetry and political events of his time, I support the view of the New Historicists that history has a textual nature (it is open to reinterpretation) and that politics and power can have an impact on the construction of literature. If I were aiming at a more literary appreciation of the poems, a different approach might be more suitable, although as Habinek has said: 'without attention to the strategic positioning of the phrase or text and without a sociology rigorous enough to relate the ideology of the text to the material circumstances of ancient society, we are still left with an essentially formalist and idealist approach to literature.'¹⁶ Accordingly, the mention of real figures such as Julius Caesar is very important, both in understanding how Caesar's politics and power affected Catullus and how Catullus through his verses was able to affect that politics and power.

Psychoanalysis has emphasised the part played by the subconscious in literary creativity, and I would argue that it has a role in recognising the influence of the subconscious in literary criticism too. We cannot always see the pack on our own back as Catullus says.¹⁷ So, Quinn and Macleod may not have realised how much their own

personal views on homosexuality coloured their interpretations of Catullus' sexuality (ie Catullus must be serious about Lesbia, while the poems about Juventius are imitations of Hellenistic verses with no relationship to reality).¹⁸ More recent work on Roman sexuality has shown how anachronistic such terms as homosexuality are.¹⁹ No doubt subconscious personal views and assumptions (my back-packs) will have influenced my arguments and to illustrate further my methodology, both conscious and unconscious, I consider some readings by other critics and discuss how my approach differs and with what result.

Cairns analyses the use of suspense in poem xxxi: 'The reader who has begun not even knowing what Sirmio is now knows that Catullus likes Sirmio very much...' and 'The effect of not revealing his relationship to Sirmio for so long [8 lines] is to keep the reader in suspense.' He also comments on the 'little lake of Garda.'²⁰ Even if one assumes that there was no form of preliminary introduction at recitations or accompanying a copy of a poem, many of Catullus' contemporary audience would have heard that there was a place called Sirmio in Cisalpine Gaul and many would have known Catullus' relationship with this place. Who therefore is 'the reader' Cairns refers to? Certainly not a contemporary of Catullus' as the suspense that Cairns discusses is only appropriate to a modern reader, reading the poem for the first time. It is part of a text created by that reader, and not by Catullus. Whether this makes his comments pertinent depends on how we react to this 'death of the author.'²¹ His comment on Lake Garda is more straightforwardly misleading. Lake Garda strikes the viewer by its vastness, its edge bordered by Alps made hazy by the distance. As Wiseman reflected: 'For however limited the Victorians' reading of the poem seems to us now, they were surely right about one thing: to understand it fully you need to know the place.'²²

The 'text' that the audience creates has its importance; as Pedrick argues, 'Audience response is also a part of the corpus as a whole, since the individual poems contain so many inter-textual references among themselves that it becomes easy (and prudent) to imagine the audience listening in or paying attention across the whole range of poems, making connections that enhance their understanding of the situation in any one poem.'²³ Calvus, for example, would generally have known exactly when and where a poem fitted into Catullus' frame of mind and would have picked up nuances far too subtle for us and for others in Catullus' contemporary audience as well. We also know from poem 1 that in his case, audience response may have been part of the process of actual composition. Furthermore, there are almost certainly complex levels of coding not apparent to the modern reader, which may account for some of the extensive time spent composing such works as Calvus' *Io* or Caecilius' *Magna Mater*.²⁴

Janan, through her explicitly Lacanian method, takes a more deconstructionist approach to the Lesbia cycle and comments: 'Reading the [Lesbia] cycle requires sorting out, into meaningful opposition and sequence, otherwise meaningless elements.... The poems can, in fact, encompass a wide variety of possible 'plots' of desire. Thus their very limitation – the absence of surrounding detail that would allow us to fix them in a logically determined sequence – lends itself to an expansion of narrative possibilities.'²⁵ As an example, she cites poem cvii: 'It invites the reader to construct a narrative sequence of events in which to fit this piece of information.'²⁶ Janan's approach does not take into account either Catullus' contemporary readership or any information that we might have outside the poems and renders his own intentions more or less irrelevant, making tone and use of irony virtually impossible to recover.²⁷ While I have no intention of attempting to reconstruct Catullus' love affair, it is of critical importance to me in discussing such love

poems to be aware of the great difference between the love poetry of the later elegists addressed to women who appear to be prostitutes or invented for the sake of the poem and the love poetry of Catullus which was directed at a top-ranking consular wife or widow whom he identified to his audience by an explicit reference to her brother in poem lxxix, and who was a person of public renown and activity in her own right.²⁸

We do not always have the relevant historical information; Janan is certainly right here and poem xlix about Cicero is a good example of this. Adler has argued that ‘if Catullus meant this poem to endure *plus uno saeclo* (c.1.11), he can hardly have intended its interpretation to be tied to obscure events of history or biography.’²⁹ There are many well documented events that could help explain this poem as either compliment or insult, depending on Cicero’s position regarding Caesar, Pompey, Clodius, Clodia, Piso and Vatinius just to name a few high profile protagonists.³⁰ The point is that this poem probably was not intended for an uninformed reader; as Clarke has argued, a poem which does not reveal the whole story to the modern reader is likely to be based in reality, as a fictitious poem would provide the crucial details.³¹

Perkell’s approach to interpreting controversial passages in the *Aeneid* is also relevant to this poem: she asks, ‘Is a correct reading achievable through a better, more compelling assemblage of data? Or rather, does long controversy, *ipso facto*, reveal the inherent ambiguity of a passage?’³² Combining these two approaches with regards to Catullus’ poem about Cicero, we may argue that the ambiguity is more likely to be due to our lack of knowledge than any inherent ambiguities, and that it was a ‘real’ topical poem, primarily aimed at the contemporary audience who would have held the key to the ambiguity in their knowledge of recent events. Knowing what we do of Cicero, we may also consider whether there is present a subtle level of irony. While Cicero may have

thought he knew what Catullus meant, this does not preclude the possibility that Catullus may be playing on Cicero's self-assurance; would Cicero, the writer of 'O fortunate Rome, born in my consulship' (*o fortunatam natam me consule Romam*)³³ take 'Most eloquent of Romulus' grandsons, living and past' (*disertissime Romuli nepotum/quot sunt quotque fuere*) as overly complimentary? A close reading of the text as is encouraged by the New Critical approach is also illuminating, revealing for example that at the time of Catullus the use of superlatives in address was not necessarily to be taken literally; the overuse of superlatives actually meant that positives could have more weight which might significantly reduce the hyperbole of Catullus' praise.³⁴

My next example is a poem in the Lesbia cycle, poem xi, and the approach of Fredricksmeier, who unlike Janan who considers the poems as a cycle, takes a more formalist approach to the poems, taking individual poems by themselves with the assumption that we have all the information the author intended us to have.³⁵ In explaining the meaning of poem xi, he creates a 'plot of desire' in which he argues that the start of the poem should be interpreted by what follows; that Catullus is contrasting his life of love for Lesbia, which had gone before, with the future, a life of male friendship and adventure. Further, he asserts: 'In happy times with Lesbia, Catullus had also neglected the gods...but his new life will be marked by *pietas* to the gods as well as to his own country.'³⁶

In assessing the validity of Fredricksmeier's interpretation, I consider in addition to the text of poem xi relevant external information and other poems within the same cycle. A significant piece of information often overlooked is that we have the date of the poem. While we cannot date many of Catullus' poems – and this problem is explored in more detail in chapter two – this is one poem that can be dated with reasonable accuracy to approximately 55 BC or shortly after because of the reference to Caesar's invasion of

Britain. This raises the interesting possibility that this poem was probably written soon after Catullus' trip to Bithynia, perhaps even the following year.³⁷ A real-life period of male friendship and adventure, therefore, had occurred just before Catullus wrote this poem. Fredricksmeier's analysis makes no attempt, however, to explain the question it raises; why Catullus apparently reverses the events of his actual life and for what effect on his contemporary audience? There is also a problem with his comment about the role of *pietas* in Catullus' life; he does not consider Catullus' often striking use of the word in other poems, especially Poem lxxvi, where he describes his past relationship with Lesbia precisely in terms of *pietas*?³⁸

Lack of consistency is another aspect of Catullus' poems relevant to our understanding of poem xi but which is lost when the poem is discussed in isolation. Fredricksmeier makes no comment on how we interpret Catullus' passing comment about Caesar's great monument when elsewhere Catullus is highly abusive towards Caesar. It is also possible that poem xi is not the final word on Catullus' relationship with Lesbia as it appears; from other poems we know that Catullus is far from consistent in his approach to love and Lesbia – as Janan pointed out. At one moment he is ready to turn a blind eye to Lesbia's other love affairs (lxviii 136: *rara furta*), at another he berates her for having other lovers (lxxii) and attacks these other lovers as rivals. In poem viii he expresses strong emotion, yet poem xcii talks of arguments with Lesbia in a much lighter-hearted vein. Furthermore, in poem civ, Catullus says he is unable to curse his 'life', which leaves the reader questioning Catullus' definition of maledictory poems.³⁹

There is also inconsistency in his friendship with Furius and Aurelius, the messengers of poem xi, as they themselves are the targets of abuse in poem xvi. It is hard for the modern reader reading that poem in isolation to judge the possibility of humour in

Catullus' abusive language yet Poem xlii contains a clear indication that we should not always take him literally; the joke here is that he changes his address from 'foul adulteress' (*moecha turpis*) into 'chaste and honest lady' (*pudica et proba*) to get his tablets back.

Depending on how we interpret Catullus' relationship with Furius and Aurelius, therefore, the tone of the opening of poem xi may range from sincerely friendly, arguing that poem xvi contains simply laddish language between friends, to bitterly ironic with the insults of sexual effeminacy of xvi linking to the distortedly masculine sexual behaviour Catullus attributes to Lesbia in the final section of the poem.

There is a fine line between considering the evidence of other poems and creating circular arguments. The differentiating factor is that I am not arguing that Fredricksmeyer is wrong in his interpretation because of supposed autobiographical data in other poems. Rather I am testing his hypothesis in the light of facts (eg Caesar's invasion of Britain) and by consideration of how aspects of other poems (eg those about Bithynia and Lesbia) may relate to it and provide clues to Catullus' intentions and tone. On the grounds that 'the best interpretation is the most inclusive'⁴⁰ it seem reasonable therefore to reject Fredricksmeyer's interpretation as creating as many problems as it solves. Cutting himself off from other sources of information both within and external to the poems has led Fredricksmeyer to create a simplistic reading and a one-sided view of Catullus similar to 'Johnson's *pious* Catullus, Havelock's lyric Catullus and Kroll's impetuous child of nature.'⁴¹ While we may accept that every age will to some extent reinterpret an author, we can at least aim to interpret Catullus by all his poems, not from an arbitrary selection.⁴²

My approach does not answer all questions; in the case of poem lxxxv, it may return the reader to earlier receptions of Catullus as revealing his own feelings not those of a 'Catullus', but it adds the proviso that we cannot assume we understand exactly what

Catullus is describing here; so I agree with Adler when she says: ‘It is natural to take the speaker [poem 85] to be Catullus, as readers have doubtless always done.’ But, as Quinn points out: ‘Nothing...that we can point to in the text connects Poem 85 with the Lesbia affair.’⁴³ While I have sympathy for Quinn’s response (‘Yet who can doubt that it belongs – or deny that it gains strength and poignancy from our recognition of this?’), it is important that we recognise that this is an assumption requiring examination not a fact.

My method can be seen, therefore, to be somewhat eclectic. In recognising the inherent risks, I hope to avoid the ‘perversities’ to which my approach may be prone, as Wray suggests: ‘The empiricist, “commonsense” solution to the problem of getting around those preconditions – forgetting modern reception and just reading the poems in their ancient context – tends to produce perverse results.’⁴⁴ The overarching factor is whether such an approach is useful for this particular subject, the investigation of the personal and political voice in Catullus.

POLITICS AND THE ROLE OF THE POET

As part of the process of defamiliarising Catullus, it is important to understand the differences between the level of cultural integration of politics in the fifties BC in Rome and 21st century Britain. ‘Politics’ in what follows ranges more broadly than ‘statecraft, matters of government, and party strife’, the OED definition. Roman political life did not rely on representative political parties, but affected many more than those strictly defined as belonging to the senatorial order and encompassed far more personal aspects of Roman life. The Senate was not constitutionally a legislative body, and the workings of politics took place through a wide range of different activities and involved many Romans in different ways.⁴⁵ The various assemblies, for example, were active in more than just

annual elections. As Tatum put it, ‘The lofty goal of preserving and enhancing the *res publica* was worked out in elections, legislative assemblies, meetings of the senate, public trials, and in the exercise of friendship and patronage, [and] pageants of personal interaction.’⁴⁶

Within this broader cultural framework, the personal and individual nature of Roman politics is important; an élite Roman citizen did not work for the good of a party, but rather on an individual basis, for his own pre-eminence and the glory of his family, and the good of the Republic.⁴⁷ The good of the Republic, it goes without saying, could generally be identified with his own position and ambitions. ‘Each in reality was vying for his own advancement’ was how Sallust described contemporary politics.⁴⁸ The ultimate, unquestioned aim was to become consul, which conferred or confirmed the *nobilitas* of the office holder and his family. This link between nobility and political office effectively politicised the social élite. Subsequent male descendants of consular families may have felt it more or less their right to hold office, but even so, all officials had to go through the process of election, and the lack of representational party politics meant that there were no ‘safe seats’ or ‘rotten boroughs’.⁴⁹

The lack of political parties had other impacts on politics; it removed the constraint of party views, historical policy decisions,⁵⁰ and manifesto commitments. It also removed any central source of funding for electoral campaigns and general electoral support. In this context, who you were, and who your friends were, became very important, as those standing for election had to canvas support themselves and through networks of allegiances, such as *amicitiae* and *clientela*. It is this use of allegiances, some very long standing, to raise votes, which created groupings of politicians and has led to a false notion

of party politics. Divisions such as *Populares* and *Optimates* are also not terms that signify organised parties, but rather preferred methods of political manoeuvring.⁵¹

Amicitia, for which ‘friendship’ is an inadequate translation, helped to bind families together for mutual benefit, and could be contradictory and transient.⁵² Some scholars have argued that *amicitia* was a purely political alliance: Syme argued that ‘*amicitia* was a weapon of politics not a sentiment based on congeniality.’⁵³ Brunt argues for some involvement of what we think of as friendship: ‘it is implausible to suppose that the Romans, whose word for friendship...derives from *amo*, had no native acquaintance with genuine affection of a non-sexual nature.’⁵⁴ The truth is probably a combination of the two; Cicero certainly addressed as *amici* those who were not in any way friends on a social level, but from pure political expediency, such as Appius Claudius Pulcher, as well as true friends such as Atticus.⁵⁵ It is perhaps more useful to see how interlinked the personal and political were rather than try to disentangle them.

A member of the nobility would have a broad range of *amici* (friends/contacts). Furthermore, he would also be *patronus* (sponsor) to a large number of *clientes* (supporters), bound to him by the duties of *clientela*, similar to those of *amicitia*. Although also called *amici*, broadly speaking, *clientes* were of a lower status.⁵⁶ They would include ex-slaves and others who had benefited from or had some form of dependency on the family. All these connections could give a well-born candidate a significant advantage in seeking electoral success. He had other potential advantages: relatives may currently be holding, or have recently held office; his family name would be already be familiar to the electorate; and funds and canvassing know-how were likely to be readily available to transform all these advantages into vital votes.

Some families had divine ancestry to exploit as another form of self-promotion: Julius Caesar may have been impatient with Bibulus in his consular year for his religious objection of ‘watching the heavens’, but was ready to exploit religion through his own allegedly divine ancestry for self-promotion in his early career. He was not the only one: ‘When the quaestor C Iulius Caesar began his aunt’s funerary *laudatio* with these words [his claims to divine ancestry] in 69 BC, he was not claiming any unique glory appropriate only to ‘imperial Caesar’, but indulging in a form of family pride shared by many aristocrats in the late Republic.’⁵⁷ Cornell comments as well on nobles’ use of the past: ‘The historical past of Rome was not a subject of purely academic interest in the Republican period, but on the contrary, a matter of direct political concern to the ruling élite.’⁵⁸

Amicitia and family background were therefore two important and inter-related aspects of successful political life. A third element, also dependent on the other two, again emphasises the personal element in the broad framework of Roman political life. This was a citizen’s *fama* and *gloria*; his reputation, personal prestige, and achievements.⁵⁹ These combined to create his *auctoritas*. The importance of this element can be seen through day-to-day activities. The morning salutation was an ideal time to show off one’s significant crowd of friends and clients to impress others, enhance one’s prestige and display one’s potential voting power. Its setting was the *domus* (‘home’), key for the projection of a Roman man’s personal status and public image.⁶⁰ The law-courts gave opportunities to gain notice by an audacious prosecution, to win favours by defending a political figure or showing moral support. A day spent in leisure, writing love and occasional poems might be the sign of a poet not involved in political life; on the other hand, writing all genres of literature was an accepted way of spending leisure time (*otium*)

for politicians.⁶¹ Throwers of dinner parties could have ulterior motives; Krostenko pointed out that ‘Plutarch argued that [Caesar] owed the gradual growth of his political influence to his practice of hosting dinners.’⁶² These occasions could also provide the opportunity for informal networking, arranging marriage alliances or adoptions, and strengthening support bases more generally. The blurring of public and private entertaining space in the *domus* can be seen, for example, in the layouts of town houses of the wealthy in Pompeii.⁶³

Poets such as Calvus, Furius Bibaculus and Catullus could have a big impact on the reputation and prestige of politicians. What may be taken as a personal attack – for example, attacking Mamurra for his literary pretensions (poem cv) – becomes political if it can be shown to diminish prestige and attack reputation. Because of the ties of *amicitia*, to attack Mamurra is also to attack Caesar, his great supporter.

The use of personal attack also raises the subject of what was considered ‘fair game’ in political competition, and again we are in a very different world to our own. Physical deformity in an opponent, for example, was grist to the mill for Cicero. This depended on the Roman notion that exterior shortcomings reflected interior character and personality faults.⁶⁴ In our society, gender identity is biological and fixed, and sexual activity within a sanctioned legal framework is theoretically at least not a public issue. Yet in the society of Catullus, this situation was very different, and significantly so. Alien to us is the notion that political rights depended on adhering to a certain definition of manhood, which included participating only in controlled levels of active, penetrative sex. No less alien is the view that gender identity, far from being fixed, was, in the words of Wray, ‘a fragile and elusive possession to be earned, won and carefully guarded.’⁶⁵ Also alien to us

is the importance of power in sexual relations; the power and authority of a Roman male could be demonstrated by forcing those inferior to him to submit to sexual acts.⁶⁶

Furthermore, a failing or vice in one area could be used as evidence of general corruption of character, and so indicate failings in other areas. Corbeill observes: 'The rhetorical handbooks instruct that if an opponent can be shown to be guilty of one vice, it is then possible to implicate him in any others.'⁶⁷ Accordingly, accusations of social vice, perceptions of inadequate masculinity, and attacks on integrity and character could all affect a Roman man's social standing and status, jeopardizing his right to stand for office and to win sufficient votes for election to office. As Epstein commented: 'No area of public life was beyond exposure and ridicule. The goal was to destroy a man's *auctoritas*, the most elusive and at the same time, the most essential component of power in Rome.'⁶⁸

This cultural background sets Catullus' attacks on the manhood of various individuals very much at the heart of the political scene. Nor was he alone in the style of his attacks: 'In the political and social arena, among rivals struggling for pre-eminence, the language of combat was notoriously obscene: Latin oratory, iambic poetry and satire are all reservoirs of crude sexual insult.'⁶⁹ Cicero was a master of this art of derogatory allusion, as can be seen by the multiple insults against Gabinius who was consul at the time of the following incident: 'But when he [Gabinius] first stepped forward before a *contio* in the Circus Flaminius, not like a consul *productus* by a *tribunus* but as a pirate chief summoned by a brigand, what a man of *auctoritas* he seemed! Reeking of wine, slumber, debauchery, his hair perfumed and his locks carefully arranged, his eyes heavy and his cheeks limp, in a voice that was constricted and trembling...'⁷⁰ Thus Cicero uses all the emotiveness of fear of pirates, and condemnation of moral failings, including drunkenness, effeminacy and vanity to denounce Gabinius. Attacking social habits does not, therefore, equate to a purely

personal attack, but where it attacks reputation and masculinity, strikes at the heart of the victims' political credibility.

It is also important to understand how acceptable such verbal abuse was; using such methods in no way reflected badly on the orator.⁷¹ He just had to be confident he could handle the enmity it provoked in his victim and his *amici*. The significance of *inimicitiae* in gaining notice and reputation is also important; such attacks as Catullus made clearly signalled a lack of 'friendship' and 'such public professions of *inimicitiae*...would enhance rather than destroy a political career.'⁷² The combination of a lack of systematic, programmatic political content and personal enmity must not therefore be confused with a lack of political intent.⁷³

The literature written by Roman élite men during their leisure time (*otium*) could have significance in their work lives (*negotium*) as well. The power bases for political life were far more inclusive and convertible than for politics today. While exceptions still exists today in Western democracies – family dynasties, actresses-turned-politicians, sportsmen-turned-politicians – in Late Republican Rome, literature was as much a medium for competitive advancement as other ways of becoming known. As Habinek explains: 'Latin literature constitutes a crucial site of contest over the distribution of power in the Roman world as well as a social practice with real historical consequences of its own.'⁷⁴ He continues: 'Writers write, so they say, not to communicate ideas and certainly not to make money, but to direct attention to themselves and their performance.'⁷⁵ Likewise, Skinner observes: 'For a talented poet with first-rate histrionic skills, amateur banquet performances could attract the attention of leading personages, and so help build up a network of *amicitiae*.'⁷⁶

It is also important to understand how literature was kept as an aristocratic tool rather than becoming a popular medium; access was restricted through the continued use of performance compounded by the high expense of materials used for publication.⁷⁷ The *recherché* nature of Alexandrian verse emphasises its élitism and the selective nature of the ‘in-crowd.’⁷⁸ There is, however, potential for confusion here between the exclusivity of the creators and the less exclusive nature of the audience. Braund is only half right when she says that ‘Roman literature was the almost exclusive preserve of a tiny élite of wealthy, highly-educated men of well-born and well-connected families.’⁷⁹ What we also have to acknowledge is that for some genres, at least, the audience would be much wider than this élite. Catullus’ long and highly literary poem lxiv may not have been widely known, but a short invective against Caesar was much more likely to get bandied about at dinner parties and in the forum. Circulation of a text and publication were not as interdependent as is the case in modern literature.⁸⁰

While there was no major change in these aspects of political life during the fifties BC to what had gone before, there were some important additional factors which merit attention. One change concerned the consulship. The role of consuls had become more politicised as they now remained in Rome for their year of office rather than going immediately on their tour of duty as governor-generals.⁸¹ Cicero’s was an extreme case in this move away from a more military consular role. Perhaps more significant for the sixties and fifties, however, was the change in the role of proconsuls in that extraordinary *imperium* (powers of command) was given to some pro-consuls, resulting in long absences from Rome. This affected key political figures, such as Pompey and Caesar. During these times, they depended heavily on friends at home to keep their public profile high and to make the maximum political capital out of any successes. Attacks on reputation could be

more damaging when absence prevented effective refutation of any charges and lessened opportunities for counter-attacks.⁸² This was also true to a lesser extent for other governors, who relied on their friends while absent to defuse any accusation of incompetent administration and to support them through any prosecution that might arise when they returned. Catullus' poems mentioning military commanders or places of military significance such as Britain need to be considered within this context.

The political system at Rome was also under enormous pressure due to lack of systematic reform to cope with the demands of empire, ultimately resolved through the principate of Augustus.⁸³ While I shall deal with this topic in much greater detail in chapter 4, what may be noted immediately is that Catullus was right in the centre of the political fray unlike the most famous poets of the next generation, Horace and Virgil. As Krostenko points out, referring to Horace's satire I.5 'When Maecenas leaves and takes some exercise...Horace excuses himself and Virgil, who was there, pleaded physical ailments.... At the very moment when shared athletic activity, symbolic of shared status and active political roles, begins, the poets take their leave.'⁸⁴ Catullus, by contrast, was in the thick of it, going to one of the more recent acquisition of empire, Bithynia, and firing off attacks on the use of empire for personal advancement.⁸⁵ As Newman states, commenting on the freedom of speech allowed to Catullus and his predecessor Lucilius: 'This Archilochian boldness was unlikely to survive into the Empire.'⁸⁶

The way that Catullus interacts with cultural change is also indicative; he conforms to the Roman Republican tradition of interpreting the changes in contemporary political life as manifestations of moral degeneracy. As Earl put it: 'All Romans saw political issues in personal and social terms that is, in terms of morality.... Thus where we would see the working of the processes of economic change and sociological and political

adjustment, they saw – or appear to us to have seen – only ethical issues.’⁸⁷ Catullus’ attacks on Caesar and Mamurra for moral degeneracy fits with a society where rather than considering how the acquisition of empire had affected political, social and economic institutions, ‘we meet a firm insistence that by the middle of the second century BC Rome had undergone a moral crisis from which she never recovered.’⁸⁸ So Catullus talks of Caesar’s moral degeneracy rather than considering him as a politician struggling to fit within an inadequate, outdated system.⁸⁹ This moralistic approach can also be seen in the use of *boni* (‘the good’) to describe members of the senate, a term which ‘not merely denoted a special group of people in politics but at the same time asserted their general moral worth and their right to power because of this moral superiority.’⁹⁰ This attitude may in part be explained by the intrinsically personal nature of Roman politics.

It is also worth noting the difference in the role of religion in Roman life to our own. Religion, with the government and the army, was an integral part of Roman public life. Like public office and military command, it was dominated by Rome’s social élite. Unlike most of society today, the three areas went hand in hand, and holding one type of office enhanced possibilities for success in another; for example, Caesar’s election as *pontifex maximus* was a step up the political ladder.⁹¹ Personal belief was not a prerequisite for holding a priesthood: ‘the nobles, in contact with Greek rationalism, were themselves steadily developing scepticism towards the religion of their ancestors, but they were not deterred from exploiting religion for political purposes.’⁹² Omens probably offered the greatest potential for involvement of religion, other than a symbolic role, in political affairs; the *iustitium* proclaimed by Bibulus, already mentioned, effectively put into question the legality of Caesar’s consular legislation. Unfavourable omens could bring elections to a standstill or decide foreign policy.⁹³ Unusual activity, such as earthquakes

could be interpreted as portents for political ends; Millar discusses Clodius in his 'pretended role as the defender of Roman *religio*' exploiting of the earthquakes of 56 BC to attack the rebuilding of Cicero's house in the site of his shrine of *Libertas*.⁹⁴

Catullus has not traditionally been viewed as an active and dynamic participant in Roman life and politics. This is partly due to the predominance of formalist and New Critical approaches to Catullus, with views that the neoteric poets had no interest in providing a service to society and that neoteric aesthetic ideals (art for art's sake) led to an inward-looking perspective, with little interest in political affairs.⁹⁵ As a result, they have been considered very much part of an 'avant-garde' literary society, with no consequential aims, that is, no desire to improve their wider audience intellectually or morally, and largely cut off from the mainstream of society through the élitism of their intellectual conceptualism. The focus on the perspective of the modern audience and move away from the ancient audience's experience and reaction has promoted further this idea of a movement revolutionary in only artistic terms. Wray has recognised the effect of this critical emphasis: 'But it may be that we are still working to get past Catullus the Modernist Poet, and that it still requires a considerable act of will to reverse, for example, the implicit separation of the literary and the political in Catullus and to entertain the possibility that the poetics of Catullan self-fashioning may be an instance of politics carried on by other means.'⁹⁶

There is little evidence, indeed, that there was any identifiable movement, called either the *neoteroi* or *novi poetae*. It seems more likely that Catullus' friends were a fairly fluid group, who were joined loosely by common Alexandrian literary and aesthetic ideals, including the writing of miniature epics. This group belonged to a wider group of young men, the *delicata iuventus*, to whom, as Griffin points out, 'Cicero refers...almost as if

they constituted a political party.’ As Griffin continues, referring to Cicero’s description of this group: ‘The life we glimpse in the poems of Lucilius and again in those of Catullus and his contemporaries, has precisely this character: a life of amours, parties, drinking, jealousy, and (for some) poetry and music.’⁹⁷

Griffin’s point about a quasi-political identity is important for this discussion of the political role a poet such as Catullus might have had. As discussed already, in a society without political parties, political figures positioned themselves in completely different ways to modern politicians. Election was based far more on factors such as personality and connections rather than modern ideas such as promises set out in political manifestos. The voting system was skewed to favour rich men with property who could afford either to live in Rome or come to Rome to vote. In such circumstances, the rich young men had important votes as well as important roles in their patronage of voters and support of those standing for election.

When one starts to think in these terms, of a more holistic political situation, poetry can take on a far more political role. Just one example can show how taking this viewpoint can completely transform our interpretation of several poems.⁹⁸ In poems x and xxviii, Catullus described how badly Memmius, his praetor, treated him. These poems raise many questions: Why did Catullus allow himself to be so humiliated and emasculated? Why did Catullus choose to go with such a person, and stay with him when he appears to have the means to travel home independently? Was it politically naïve to think that the provinces were there for his exploitation? Why are there so many links between Memmius, Catullus, Calvus and Caesar?⁹⁹ Why does he weaken his attack on Memmius by mentioning that he, Memmius, received nothing either?

Considering the politics behind the poem can answer these questions. Memmius attacked Caesar after his consulship, in 59 and in 58, and so was made governor of Bithynia while an enemy of Caesar. Caesar had had a long association with the province, and would have had numerous important clients there. There was a real risk for Memmius therefore that, whatever his actual behaviour, Caesar's friends might prosecute him for extortion on his return; innocence was no guarantee of acquittal. In this context, the two points that Catullus cleverly emphasises in the two poems is not only that Memmius took nothing for himself, but that through his rigorous control, he also defended the Bithynians from the greed of his *cohors*. Taken in this light, these poems can be seen not as the grumble of a thwarted, naïve exploiter, but as an extremely subtle and effective defence by a politically motivated poet.¹⁰⁰

Whether this interpretation is accepted or not – and I shall explore it in greater detail in chapter four – these two poems reflect several aspects of politics in regard to Catullus. Firstly, they emphasise the political status of many of his friends and acquaintances; Calvus, the rival of Cicero in the law-courts, Memmius, soon to be elected consul, and of course, Caesar, one of a triumvirate of politicians most influential in Rome. Secondly they remind us that far from being an introspective aesthete at Rome, Catullus went off on a dangerous adventure to Bithynia. Thirdly, they reflect how integral politics was in late Republican Rome by the role it took in everyday conversation. Finally, the riches to be won by service abroad also emphasises how different to our own was the process of Roman political life where election expenses, including bribery, would be recouped during a provincial command after the year in office.

If it is accepted, therefore, that literature including poetry could play an important role in political life, the next question is whether this is true of Catullus' poetry, and if so,

in what way he had an effect on the contemporary political scene and with what intentions. As Habinek has said: ‘Ultimately, I believe that a study of the interestedness of particular utterances can lead to certain constructive claims about a function of a text, its historical and political dynamics and so on.’¹⁰¹ Having re-established the voice of Catullus the poet in his text in the next chapter, the following chapters seek to establish the political nature of this voice. Through this, I hope to show how far politics had an influence on the poetry of Catullus – and the poetry of Catullus had an influence on politics.

Endnotes

¹ See chapter 2 for a more detailed survey of the evidence for Catullus’ life.

² For the period 66 to 50 BC, we have Suetonius’ *Life of Julius Caesar*; Plutarch’s *Lives* (Pompey, Caesar, Crassus, Cicero and Cato Minor); Appian *BC* 2.1-35; Dio Cassius, books 36-40, Livy’s *Periochae* (102-9). Velleius Paterculus (2.40-8) also provides some evidence. From 50BC, in addition to the sources mentioned above, we also have Caesar’s *De Bello Civili*, and Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, which was written in the mid-first century AD but focused on Caesar’s encounter with Pompey in 49 BC.

³ The question of who Lesbia might have been is covered in more detail in Chapter 3.

⁴ Kennedy (1993), Skinner (1993) and Tatum (1997) are rare exceptions.

⁵ Suetonius, *Iul.* lxxiii: *Valerium Catullum, a quo sibi versiculis de Mamurra perpetua stigmata imposita non dissimulaverat, satis facientem eadem die adhibuit cenae hospitioque patris eius, sicut consuerat, uti perseveravit* (Trans Graves, Penguin 1979).

⁶ Forster *Howards End* ch iv.

⁷ By formalism, I mean discussion with reference to formal, intrinsic properties, eg, structure and imagery. Of less relevance to this approach are factors such as artistic intention or location at time of creation. This approach was influential on the development of New Criticism.

⁸ Fredricksmeyer (1993, 89).

⁹ Galinsky (1992, 19).

¹⁰ Formalists dismiss causal discussion as genetic fallacy and discussion of emotional effects as affective fallacy.

¹¹ Griffin (1985, 1).

¹² Psychoanalysis has raised the point that in considering meaning, we have to remember that the author may not have full control over meaning as subconscious thought may also be involved in creating poetry.

¹³ Von Albrecht (1992, 177). Also Russo (1973-4, 709-10): ‘In the composition and performance of poetry...Sappho’s personal poetic statements, or those of Alcaeus, were not created primarily for that of a literary public unseen by and unknown to the poet, but for presentation to a group of fellow-initiates.’ Cited by Miller (1994, 18).

¹⁴ Wiseman (1985, ch 1).

¹⁵ Krostenko (2001 passim).

¹⁶ Habinek (1998, 9). Habinek sums up here the difference between the formalist approach of New Criticism and the ‘post-modern’ methodology (approaching the *Hors-Texte*).

¹⁷ Catullus xxii, 2f: *sed non videmus manticae quod in tergo est* (But we do not see that part of the bag which is on our back).

¹⁸ Quinn (1969 and 1972a), Macleod (1973a); cf. Quinn (1972a, 256): ‘To fail to distinguish between Poems 5 and 7 and Poems 48 and 99 is carrying open mindedness too far’.

¹⁹ For example Fantham (1991), Cantarella (1992), Hallett and Skinner (Eds) (1997), and Clarke (1998; 2003).

²⁰ Cairns (in Woodman/West 1974, 6; 9).

²¹ This catchphrase arose from the title of the essay by Roland Barthes published in 1968.

²² Wiseman (1987, 313).

²³ Pedrick (1993, 189 n.4). Miller (1994, 57) points out that this is an intended outcome; this response has been 'programmed into the text itself.'

²⁴ Poem xxxv celebrates Caecilius' *magna mater* and poem xcvi alludes to Calvus' poem. Compare Cavafy ('The Hidden Things'): 'You can read a lot more in my poems if you understand them.'

²⁵ Janan (1994, 41). Foucault (1979, 159) said: '[T]he author is...the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning.' Janan expresses no such fear. Cf Bennett/Royle (1999, 24): 'We want there to be an identifiable author for a text because this comforts us with the notion that there is a particular sense to that text.'

²⁶ Janan (1994, 44).

²⁷ An aspect of Janan's book mentioned by several reviewers. Cf. Boyd (1995, 664f) whose main criticism is 'her virtual obliteration of the poet's role in contributing to the meaning of his poetry.' Percy (1995, 420) is less critical, simply pointing out that: 'Once the author and the authority of his intention disappears from the text, the question of what exactly the author wrote becomes, in Janan's reading, unimportant.'

²⁸ Poem lxxix 1: *Lesbius est pulcer*. This is true whether Lesbia is identified as the wife of Metellus Celer or another sister of Clodius. James (2000, 8), for example, never makes this important distinction in her discussion of Propertius, despite Catullus' claims to be included in discussions of love elegy. This allows her to argue that the elegiac mistress was a courtesan, not a Roman matron, and that 'the lover-poet and the *puella* share important values and interests: they flout conventional morality, ignore politics, appreciate learned poetry, and skill in music and dance; in addition, her status as *puella*, rather than respectable *femina*, makes their complicated relationship possible.' Lesbia/Clodia obviously only fits into part of this framework.

²⁹ Adler (1981, 23).

³⁰ For example, Cicero (*Ad Att.* 1.19.8) wrote to Atticus in 60 BC: *odia autem illa libidinosae ac delicatae iuventutis quae erant in me incitata sic mitigata sunt comitate quadam mea me unum ut omnes illi colant* 'The dislike which was excited against me in the minds of our licentious and luxurious young men has been so mitigated by my affability that they all make me the object of their attentions.'

³¹ Clarke (1976, 132f).

³² Perkell (1994, 63).

³³ Juvenal *Sat.* X.122.

³⁴ Dickey (2002) on superlatives.

³⁵ Cf Veyne (1988, 85): 'But, since elegy is fiction, we know everything, everything the author judged it good for us to know, which is enough.'

³⁶ Fredricksmeyer (1993, 93; 94).

³⁷ There is some debate over the date of Catullus' Bithynia trip, but this is the most likely date as I argue in chapter 2.

³⁸ Skinner (1993, 124 note 21) also points out the close connection of the 'symbolic castration' of poem 11 with the Attis castration in 63. This, she says, 'also mitigates against EA Fredricksmeyer's claim...that individual Catullan poems are to be read strictly as autonomous and self-contained texts.' Her main point is not altered by the fact that she is perhaps overstating his premise; his point is perhaps more that a face-value reading should not be dismissed too readily in favour of an ironic one on the basis of insufficient evidence.

³⁹ civ 1-2: *Credis me potuisse meae maledicere vitae, ambobus mihi quae carior est oculis?* ('Do you believe I could have cursed my life who's dearer than both eyes to me?').

⁴⁰ Eaton (1988, 110).

⁴¹ Fitzgerald (1995, 30). Fitzgerald himself is keen to avoid imposing his own view of the author, and prefers to consider poems not often associated together.

⁴² Foucault (1969), as cited in Bennett/Royle (1999, 22): 'The idea of the author is not a timeless given; the figure and significance of the author varies across time, and from one culture to another, from one discourse to another and so on.'

⁴³ Quinn (1970, xvi). I shall discuss this point and the general assumption that *mea puella* and other terms such as *mulier* refers to Lesbia in chapter 3.

⁴⁴ Wray (2001, 17f).

⁴⁵ Cf Earl (1967, 14): The power of the *nobilitas* rested 'merely on its ability to control the votes of the Roman people.... The power of the *nobilis* was in no way therefore enshrined in any legal or constitutional power.'

⁴⁶ Tatum (1997, 482).

⁴⁷ Cf Gruen (1974, 161): ‘Candidates were endorsed for office, not as politicians, but as patrons, benefactors, and heirs of illustrious *gentes*.’

⁴⁸ Sallust *Catil.* 38 *pro sua quisque potentia certabant*.

⁴⁹ Cf Millar (1998, 5): ‘The one concrete and certain fact, however, is that no one became a member of the Senate by right of birth, or without gaining some annual office that was filled by popular election.’

⁵⁰ *Mos maiorum*, superficially similar to historic party political decisions, was different in that it applied to the whole senate, not just one party.

⁵¹ A ‘popular’ politician was one who used the people’s assemblies to achieve his ends, upholding *libertas*, the people’s sovereignty, rather than the *auctoritas* of the senate, and does not imply any deeper involvement with the masses than a politician who preferred the more traditional senatorial route. That they do not denote a party can be shown by the ‘first triumvirate’ where politicians with three quite different styles joined together for mutual benefit. Politicians such as Pompey also used both methods at different times in their careers.

⁵² Catullus’ father, for example, was on friendly terms with Julius Caesar while Catullus was attacking his reputation.

⁵³ Syme (1939, 157).

⁵⁴ Brunt (1965b, 3).

⁵⁵ Cf Cicero’s discussion of different types of friendship *Ad Att.* 1.18.1.

⁵⁶ Catullus’ poem i may have a rare usage of the word *patronus* in addressing Cornelius; normally *amicus* was used by Romans in addressing either client or patron, as *cliens* denoted social inferiority, and by the time of Martial had the meaning of parasite.

⁵⁷ Wiseman (1987, 207). The words are given by Suetonius (*Iul.* 6.1, trans Wiseman): ‘On her mother’s side, Iulia, my aunt was sprung from kings, and on her father’s connected with the immortal gods. For the Marcii Reges...descend from Ancus Marcius, and the Iulii, to whom my family belongs, descend from Venus.’

⁵⁸ Cornell (1982, 206).

⁵⁹ Earl (1967, 30) explains these terms: ‘*Fama* means ‘what is said’ about a person or thing. Applied to a man, it means ‘reputation’.... Anyone can acquire a reputation for anything, good or bad. Cicero, however, speaks of ‘the good reputation of the good man which alone can truly be termed *gloria*’.’ (Cicero *Pro Sestio*, 139; *Phil.* I. 29).

⁶⁰ Tatum (1999, 160); ‘The *domus*, in its combined representation of personal status and public image and in its affinities with sacred space, was at once a principal and living focus of an aristocrat’s political activity and a vital symbol of his political power – hence the potency of the *domus* in the language of political imagery and in the actual discourse of politics.’ The politically inspired destruction of Cicero’s *domus* is an obvious example.

⁶¹ Sallust, for example, was very aware that it was not socially acceptable to give up a public career as a Senator to write history as Earl (1967, 23) comments: ‘Sallust, even after the murder of Caesar, felt strongly the obligation to justify both his retirement and its occupation.’

⁶² Krostenko (2001, 292); Plutarch *Caesar* 4.5.

⁶³ Cf Tatum (1999, 159): ‘in fact the Roman *domus* was a remarkably public structure, even in recesses that modern sensibilities would expect to be wholly personal and private.’

⁶⁴ Charlotte Brontë includes reference to the not dissimilar study of craniology, whereby the shape of the head reveals character; for example, Jane Eyre comments on the structure of Rochester’s forehead.

⁶⁵ Wray (2001, 62).

⁶⁶ An example from the genre of declamation, while admittedly sensational, illustrates this connection of power and sex: ‘During the Cimbrian War, a military tribune attempted to sexually assault one of Marius’ soldiers. The soldier killed the tribune, a kinsman of Marius. He is accused of murder before the general.’ Quintilian *DM* 3.

⁶⁷ Corbeill (1997, 104). He refers to Cicero *Inv. Rhet.* 2.33; 2.50 and *Rhet. Her.* 2.5.

⁶⁸ Epstein (1987, 76).

⁶⁹ Skinner (1997, 12). Cf Epstein (1987, 91) on litigation: ‘No rules of evidence protected a defendant from the most ferocious personal attacks on all aspects of his public and private life.’

⁷⁰ Cicero *Post red. in sen.* 6.13, trans. Millar (1998, 139).

⁷¹ This point is missed by Nappa (2001, 27) when he argues that the ‘Catullus’ the poet creates is an unsympathetic character to his audience as, among other things, ‘his political interests are limited to venomous personal attacks.’

⁷² Epstein (1987, 19). Epstein illustrates this (p20) through reference to Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. Nepos (fr. 1) records her as saying: ‘You will say that it is beautiful to take revenge on your enemies. I

consider revenge as important and glorious as anyone, but only if it can be attained without harm to the Republic.'

⁷³ Cf Miller (1994, 135f) who concludes that the invectives are not politically inspired as they 'are almost entirely devoid of any true programmatic political content, instead expressing a personal animus.'

⁷⁴ Habinek (1998, 8).

⁷⁵ Habinek (1998, 105).

⁷⁶ Skinner (1993, 62).

⁷⁷ It is likely given their expertise in other technical fields that had they wanted to, the Romans would have devised a cheaper method of transmitting text.

⁷⁸ Skinner (1993, 62) warns against any view of Catullus as 'professional entertainer.' It is perhaps more useful to compare him to aristocratic composers, including European Heads of State such as Frederick the Great and Henry VIII, or to members of the court who played the aristocratic viol in conjunction with lower class musicians who played the violin, a far less prestigious instrument.

⁷⁹ Braund (1996, viii).

⁸⁰ The poetry of Benjamin Zephaniah is a modern example of literature circulated orally; when travelling in the Eastern Block, his oral poetry caused great problems to the authorities as their literary censorship depended on a written text.

⁸¹ Millar (1998, 125).

⁸² Cf Epstein (1987, 47): 'Friends were particularly essential when a Roman left the city for an extended time, opening a breach for his enemies while he could not adequately defend himself.'

⁸³ Cf Syme (1939) 8: 'In the revolution, the power of the old governing class was broken, its composition transformed. Italy and the non-political orders in society triumphed over Rome and the Roman aristocracy.' An interesting slant on the position of Augustus has been provided in a survey of Iraqis, just a year after the Coalition Forces invasion; a significant majority of those surveyed thought a strong leader was more important than democracy (BBC Today programme: 16 March, 2004).

⁸⁴ Krostenko (2001, 298). The reference to sport is interesting: an issue in equal opportunities at work today is the question of where big decisions are made, and the role of such activities as week-end golf sessions in decision-making, and the resulting exclusion of those not present.

⁸⁵ Cf Catullus xxix on Mamurra eating up the profits of Britain and Gaul. Elite confusion about the purpose of empire may be reflected in his own disappointment to benefit from Bithynian wealth (eg the preceding poem xxviii).

⁸⁶ Newman (1990, 25).

⁸⁷ Earl (1967, 17).

⁸⁸ Earl (1967, 17).

⁸⁹ This is true even if our view of Caesar is less sympathetic; he is not attacked for such failings as excessive desire for *gloria* and over-emphasis on his own *dignitas*.

⁹⁰ Earl (1967, 19).

⁹¹ We may compare the Bishops in the House of Lords.

⁹² Taylor (1949, 77f).

⁹³ In 57, the consul Metellus supported by Milo prevented elections taking place by declaring unfavourable omens. In 56, an omen prevented military support being given to Ptolemy Auletes.

⁹⁴ Millar (1998, 164).

⁹⁵ Habinek's chief aim in his book, 'The Politics of Latin Literature,' was to 'politicize and historicize the reading of texts of classical literature that are still too frequently regarded in purely *formalistic* or *aesthetic* terms.' (1998, 4).

⁹⁶ Wray (2001, 28).

⁹⁷ Griffin (1985, 5); Cicero *Ad Att.* 1.19.8.

⁹⁸ The following interpretation was first suggested by David Braund (1996, 45-57).

⁹⁹ Suetonius *Iul.* 73 mentions Calvus, Memmius and Catullus as examples of Caesar's forgiveness; Memmius and Calvus both used the sneer about Nicomedes IV; Catullus and Memmius went to a province which had significant ties with Caesar; Memmius was friendly with Caesar in 54 BC, the date of Catullus' poem 11, describing Caesar as *magnus*.

¹⁰⁰ A deconstructive approach, as described by Habinek (1998, 8), may be useful if there is a case of 'versions of reality which the reader can deconstruct through close attention to what is unspoken or suppressed... to tensions or oppositions glossed over by the use of language that consolidates and naturalises the particularities of experience and phenomena.'

¹⁰¹ Habinek (1998, 9).

Chapter One

REDISCOVERING THE CATULLAN VOICE

vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus... (v 1)
miser Catulle, desinas ineptire... (viii 1)
vale, puella. iam Catullus obdurat... (viii 12)

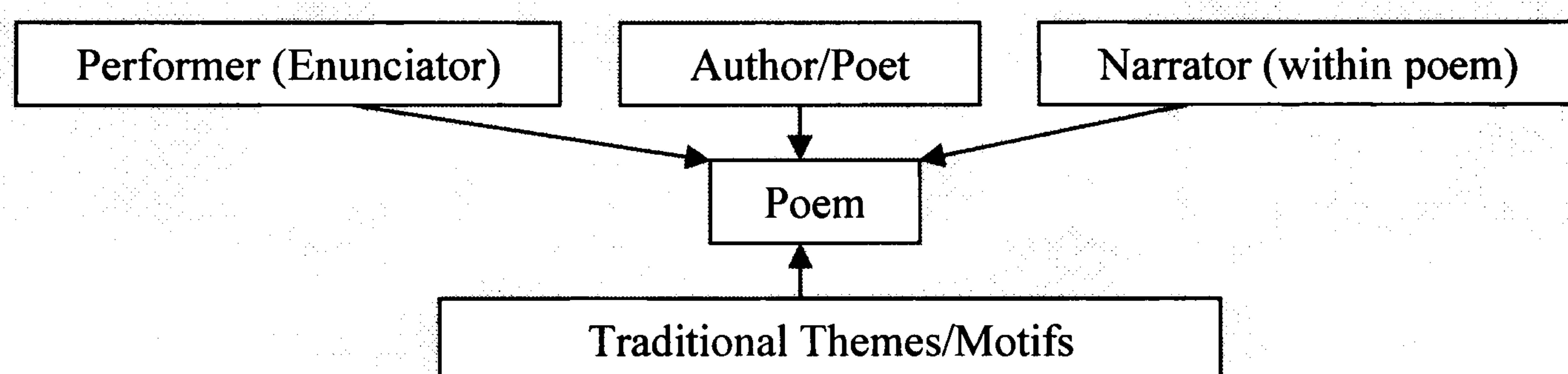
In this chapter I address how we, as an audience, should interpret the poet's voice that we read or hear in the poems. I question whether Catullus creates a *persona* 'Catullus' through his use of the first, second and third person self-address or self-reference, as in the quotations given above, or whether this is the poet talking in his own voice, as in other forms of confessional literature? A closely related issue is how we should interpret the numerous biographical references: are these hints from the poet that we should read the *I* of the poems, as it has long been taken, to mean the poet; is this always the case; and, if not, how should we differentiate? To answer these questions, I consider the history of the various genres of subjective verse that may have influenced Catullus. Having established from the earlier traditions of poetic *persona* how his contemporary audience may have interpreted his intentions, I then discuss whether Catullus' use fits within these earlier traditions, is a novel use, or somewhere in between. In the second part of this chapter, I consider how poetry is created, and whether we can assume that the nature of Catullus' verse rules out spontaneous composition. I then briefly consider what poetic use Catullus may have made of the first person and self-address modes.

THE SUBJECTIVE I

What we know of the earliest oral tradition of poetry is very sketchy, although in Archaic Greek literature we see that the appearance of *I* was not restricted to the written text.

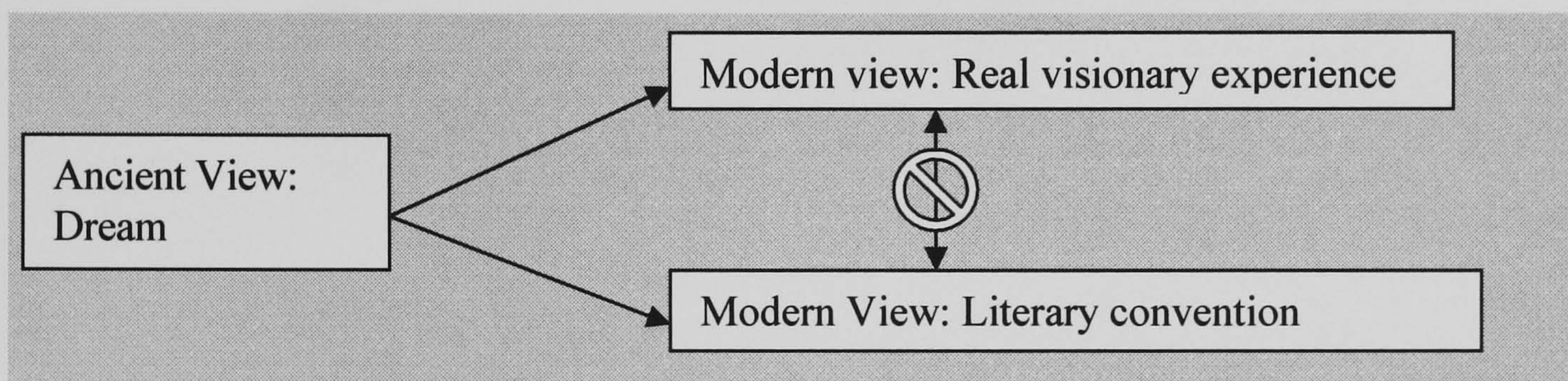
There seems to have been three performance situations where the first person pronoun might be used: firstly where an *aoidos* or *rhapsoidos* (singers or professional reciters of poetry), also sometimes the composer of the song, would perform a work known by heart, accompanying himself on the lyre; secondly, where a poet recites a relatively short poem he has composed, accompanied by pipe or lyre in the form of monody, to a circle of intimate friends; and thirdly – and possibly the earliest form – a chorus sings the song, either led by the poet or by chorus leader (*chorēgos*). Thus it is apparent that there would be occasions when the person who composed did not perform and that the audience would be expected to distinguish between the author and the enunciator (performer), and between the enunciator – either an individual or chorus – and any narrator within the poem. In addition, the audience would also be identifying traditional motifs and themes. Figure 1 illustrates this position.

Figure 1



This early situation developed with the growing awareness of the poet-creator's autonomy and the secularisation of his function in Greek society. We see the anonymous *I* narrator transformed into a proper name through the use of *sphragis* (signature), which was not a feature of Homeric verse and the epic genre. This begins to give a precise identity to the poet on a more referential level. The earliest incidence we have is in Hesiod's *Theogony* (8th Century BC), where the poet describes a personal encounter with the Muses. Calame explains the various critical readings which are illustrated in figure 2: 'The Ancients generally thought of the scene as a dream, but modern interpreters see either the sincerity of a real visionary experience or the fiction of a literary convention.'¹

Figure 2

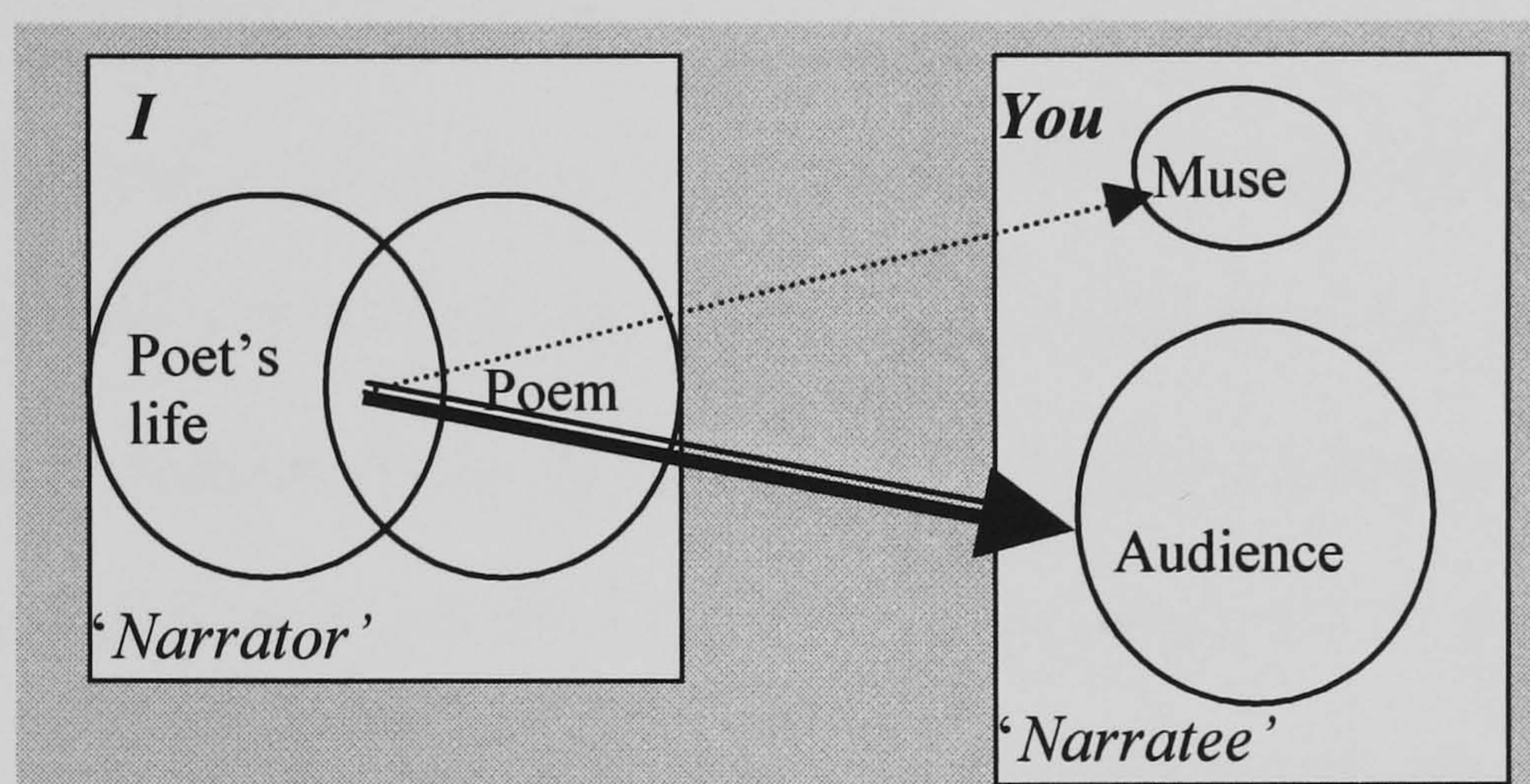


We have an ancient view, therefore, which is generally dismissed, and modern critical views, which, at their extremes, are diametrically opposed. Ironically, Hesiod's own Muses reveal the dangers of, on the one hand, taking poetry literally and on the other, of dismissing any idea of truth altogether: 'We know how to tell many lies like the truth, and we know how to tell the truth when we please.'²

The situation does not get any clearer as we consider later poets. Archilochus is generally recognised as the first extant lyric poet in the West and seems to be the first surviving example of a new style of poetry in the seventh century BC, presented in the first person as had been seen before, but with subject matter based on the immediate events of

every day life.³ With this type of verse, the subjectivity of the first person takes on a new significance; we do not just have a poet commenting on the narrative, but his life becomes – or appears to become – part of the narrative and comment.⁴ Also significant is the change in the position of the *you* of the poem: the clear affirmation of the *I* corresponds with the more subordinate position of the Muse as the audience takes on the role of ‘narratee’ (see Figure 3).

Figure 3



This complicates the apparent sincerity of the *I* in a way not seen with the straightforward bardic interjections of Homer, prompting Calame to warn: ‘It cannot be stressed enough that the position of the narrator/speaker corresponding in archaic Greek poetry to the use of the pronoun *I* is only a simulation; it refers only quite indirectly to the biographical, intradiscursive person of the author.’⁵ When, however, the poet refers to him or herself by name, the situation is altered. As Calame puts it: ‘The transformation of the *I* into a proper name...implies a reference to the communication situation, for, once named, the narrator possesses an identity on the *referential* level.’⁶ He does qualify this statement, however: ‘True, the process of the *sphragis*, or ‘signature’...sometimes gives to this *I* the identity conferred by the proper name; but the proper name in its own right

belongs to the domain of the extradiscursive; it does not necessarily refer to an *empirical author*.⁷ Not necessarily, true, but Calame does not go so far as some critics who claim that it can *never* be taken to refer to the empirical author.⁸ Can we distinguish, then?

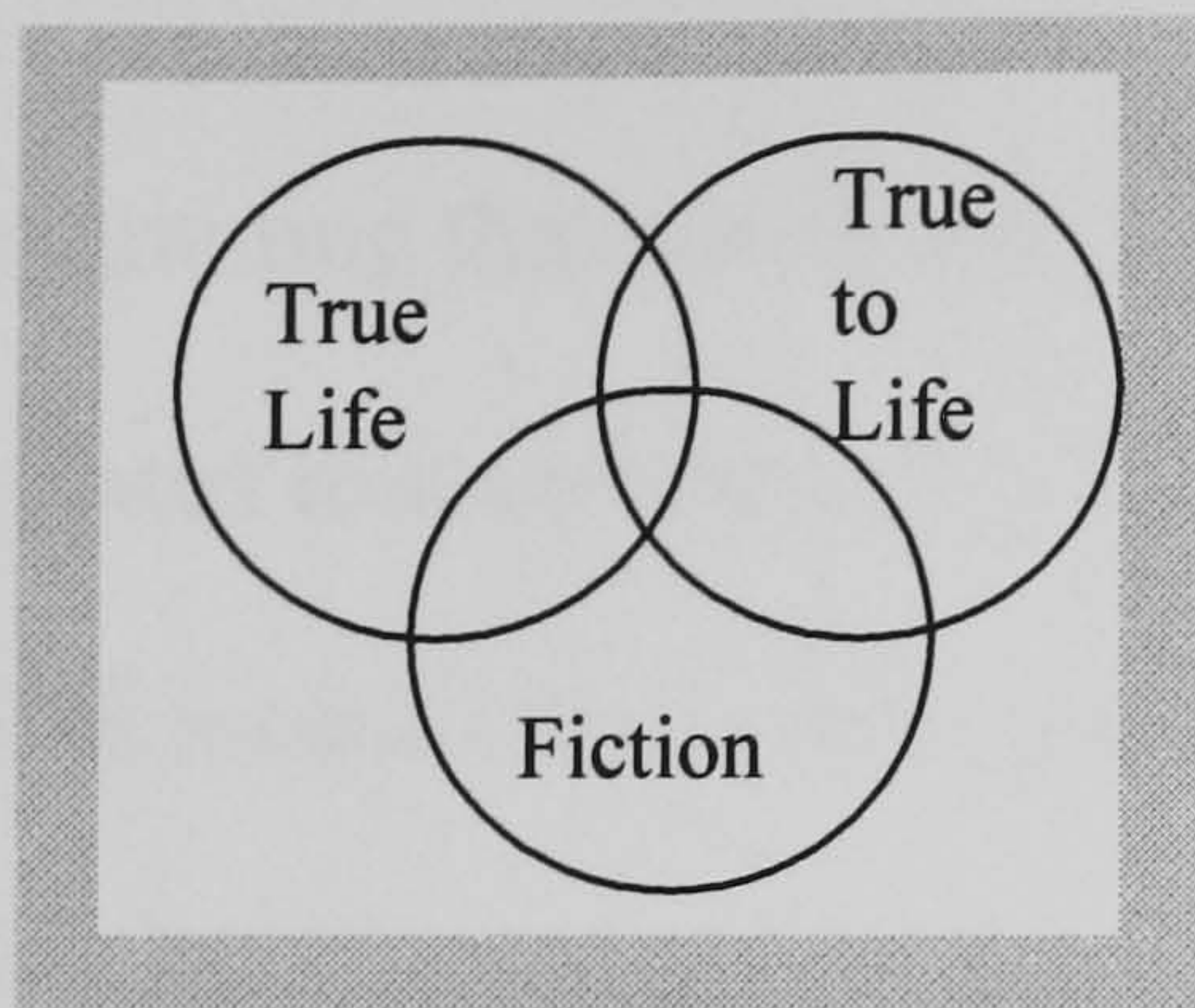
Modern criticism urges us to be clear about how Archilochus' poetry is significant. Discredited is the 'search for passionate individuality in archaic poetry...motivated by the conviction that all lyric is or should be the expression of vivid personal emotion.'⁹ Far from being passionately and consistently sincere, we are told that 'archaic lyric poets frequently stand as far from their material as any faceless story-teller could'¹⁰ and can be 'more artful and less passionate, more conventional and less individual.'¹¹ Their seemingly spontaneous *I* statements have to be considered in the context of highly crafted, complexly ornamented, sometimes rather emotionally-detached verse. But we also have to remember that we are dealing with highly proficient crafters of metrical verse, who might at other times be encapsulating their real emotions, and being more passionate and more individual than the technical excellence of their verse might at first suggest. This issue I shall explore further, later in this chapter.

It is useful to consider the implications for the audience in these changes. Audiences from an early period could distinguish between the first person of the poet and enunciator, and Archilochus' audience understood the narrative technique where a poet adopts a mask: for example, in the 'Gyges' poem of Archilochus (22T), Charon the carpenter is clearly the narrator.¹² That use of *persona*, clearly signified in the text by the author, is straightforward, but is confusingly confounded with the use in much later poetry, such as Augustan elegy, of *I* to mean not the poet, but a fictional character that speaks in the first person and uses the poet's name. This is a very different use of *persona*, and could potentially be very complicated; we would now have a performance situation where the narrator within the poem is different to the enunciator performing the poem, who is

different again to the poet who composed the poem, but all use *I* and the poet's name. Such usage would require considerable sophistication of audience or – rather simpler – personal awareness of the poet's real life to differentiate between fact and fiction, *persona* and poet. Thus, when Anacreon declares: 'It's Cleoboulos I love, it's Cleoboulos I'm mad about, it's Cleoboulos I gape at' (359 PMG), Slings points out that if the audience knows Cleoboulos, which is an inference that must be considered, then 'despite all the canons of New Criticism, it would be silly to deny that the audience will have taken *I* to mean 'I, Anacreon (though since lyric poets can be liars the feelings may have been exaggerated).'¹³

Slings introduces a further complication: 'There is another dimension to the problem of fiction that has been neglected in general in the discussion of the *I* in Greek lyric. Even when there are reasons to assume that in a given poem *I* and singer are identical, this does not imply that the statements made and the stories told by the *I* are not fictional.'¹⁴ The experiences related in the poem do not therefore have to be biographically correct or precise just because the poet writes as him or herself; they can be based on the poet's true life, events 'true to life' or pure fiction – or a combination of these.¹⁵ Thus when Calame says: 'At the time of Alcman, we see how the *I* that makes its appearance in Sappho's poems probably refers back to the author,' this does not mean that it also refers back to the author's life.¹⁶ Figure 4 illustrates how these aspects may combine in a particular poem, such as poem xi, where Catullus refers to the historical figure of Caesar and his achievements, describes his broken love in a way the reader can empathise with, whether it portrays his own love accurately or not, and uses hyperbole in the unrealistic description of Lesbia's lovers.

Figure 4



Slings interprets the First Cologne Epode as having a biographical *I* (it is Archilochus speaking) but some fictional content mixed with true elements; thus Neoboule and Lycambes existed, and there was some relationship between them and Archilochus. It is worth considering in this context whether an audience cares if what is being said about real people is true or in effect slanderous? Do we care about the truth behind celebrity gossip today so long as we are entertained? Usually a kernel of truth is all that is necessary.

Choice of genre is clearly significant in assessing the poet's apparent sincerity: 'It is fair to say that his [Archilochus'] iambic poetry treats [the themes] in a more direct and immediate fashion, and that we have a clearer impression of the poet speaking in his own voice to us in this less formal metre.'¹⁷ This is not to say there cannot be a wide spectrum within a genre. If Archilochus is accepted as a lyricist, one can see that the poet's viewpoint could result in very different poems within a genre, as Burnett has commented: 'Archilochus viewed the public realm with sour objectivity, while his passions were engaged by failures of private morality, but for Alcaeus, life was led in the open arena of duty and power where public and private could not be separately defined.'¹⁸ There are also issues of how genres were developed over time. Pindar's poetry is particularly interesting here as, unlike his contemporary Bacchylides, he adapted the traditional restricted usage of

first person to express his own original thoughts about poetry, giving a subjective tone to *epinikia* which makes them more akin to monodic elegy than to the traditional communal choral song.¹⁹

While granting that not all the works of these early poets are personal and sincere, nor directly related to a real occasion, either communal or personal, nor purely lyrical in genre, there still remains the question of conflation of the poet with the *I* of the poems. This is far from saying that there was a sudden emergence of a totally different subjective poetry; Archilochus is not the founder of a genre that passes in a line of subjectivity through Sappho and Catullus to Shakespeare, Keats and to modern lyric.²⁰

As Burnett summarises: ‘the songs of Archilochus, Alcaeus and Sappho are obviously neither the sudden inventions of a freshly liberated ‘archaic ego’ nor the purely conventional projections of fixed communal gestures. Their metres and some elements of their language and matter mark them as deriving from ancient popular chants that accompanied cult and work [the occasional element], but their exploitation of epic motifs and diction [ie epic being impersonal, non-subjective verse] show that their makers were conscious of artistic kinship with poets of another sort [ie not a sudden, completely new departure poetically], and meanwhile touches of irony prove that the singers of these songs enjoyed the fact that their own version was not always that of their society [ie some personal, subjective intervention].’²¹

It is worth reflecting at this point that, for the purposes of this study, understanding the view held by contemporaries of Catullus and the poets discussed is as important, if not more important, than modern critics reaching a consensus on the question of the sincerity of archaic poets. I shall therefore focus on the reaction of these contemporaries to apparently sincere revelations, such as Hesiod’s dream and Archilochus’ slave mother. For example, Lefkowitz points out, ‘the evidence is clear that by the last quarter of the fifth

century *I* was understood – no matter how generally applicable the poet's advice – to represent the poet.'²² If a poet as a general rule expected their audience to take any biographical information literally, then the assumption must be that they included it intending this reaction of their audience.

It is clear, for example, that the Spartans conflated narrator with poet (and in light of Slings' argument, also conflated narrated events with the poet's life) when they issued the decree banning Archilochus from their state after hearing how he had thrown away his shield in battle.²³ Critias the Sophist, writing during the Peloponnesian war, commented on the negativity not the accuracy of the 'facts' we know about Archilochus: 'If Archilochus had not spread this opinion of himself among the Greeks, we would never have known that he was the son of Enipos, a slave women, nor that he left Paros from poverty and indigence, and so went to Thasos.'²⁴ Whether Archilochus intended his audience to understand a level of coding in the name Enipos, it is certainly clear that Critias missed any such sophistication.

The same conflation of poetic detail with poet's life is apparent in the dramas of the time: 'In the fifth century Aristophanes exploits to great advantage in a number of plays the notion that poetry and poet are interchangeable: in the *Frogs*, Euripides is persuasive, elusive, and immoral like his poetry; Aeschylus is weighty, traditional, pious and has the manner of the professional poet, isolated from other poets, particularly eschewing contact with his opponent Euripides.'²⁵ There is also a blend of reality and fiction in Plautus, where 'the speaker of the prologue speaks as a member of the troupe of actors, before becoming one of the characters in the play.'²⁶ Here he is deliberately shattering the allusion of realism, and drawing attention to this.²⁷

This blend of fiction and reality is also found in the genre of biography, where the objectives and methods of late fifth century biographers are very different to their modern

counterparts; in the *Lives* of the poets, historical accuracy in a modern sense was not a priority. Particularly revealing are the Hellenistic scholia on Pindar as these show how not only how scholars from the period so influential upon Catullus approached poetry but also how the interpretations of later poets for example, Theocritus and Horace, were coloured by these erroneous biographic statements.²⁸ To construct any accurate view of Pindar, modern critics have found it necessary to virtually deconstruct the entire image built up by these scholia; repeatedly, biographical details in the scholia seem to have been lifted straight from poems rather than being from any independent source to which we no longer have access. Early critics were also keen to point out supposed allegory in Pindar's poetry, reading his contemporaries into the characters in the poems; thus the pair of jackdaws was thought to be Bacchylides and Simonides and this allegorical approach was also applied to Callimachus (the Telchines were Asclepiades and Posidippus) and Theocritus (Simichidas = Theocritus or a friend).

Later, contemporary with Catullus, in Cicero's speech against Piso, as Krostenko has pointed out, Cicero maliciously took Philodemus' poems as evidence against Piso, using their subject matter 'like a mirror' on his life (*tamquam in speculo*).²⁹ This was a deliberate tactic of Cicero who was well aware of what he was doing; elsewhere he advises, 'No reason – except this, that you should not inquire too carefully into events that are related in that manner [ie in a poem].'³⁰ He was, however, aware that his audience could be relied upon to fail to make due distinction.

In considering these questions of imagination and verisimilitude, it is perhaps worth pausing to reflect on what fiction meant to a society where mythical events played such an integral role in everyday life. As Griffin points out: 'For Romans, we find that the imagination of the educated class thought naturally of contemporary events in Homeric terms already in the second century BC.'³¹ He gives as an example, 'Cato told Polybius

that if he ventured to face the Senate again, he would be like Odysseus going back into the Cyclops's cave to fetch his cap and belt.' Caesar's famous funeral oration on his Aunt Julia linked his lineage to the kings and the gods as part of politically-motivated image-creation.³² We also have to appreciate the importance of the rhetorical art of *inventio* in historical writing and that the criterion that mattered was *to eikos* (plausibility) rather than truth.³³ Furthermore, we must remember how different attitudes to poets could be; for example, Lefkowitz pointed out how in Plato's *Ion*, a poet is like a bee, 'a light thing and winged and holy, and not able to compose until he has become totally inspired and insane, and his mind is no longer in him.'³⁴ If a poet does not tell the truth, it might be due to deliberate telling of falsehoods, or equally, due to the Muses inspiring an erroneous version of a story. The distinction between truth and fiction, therefore, was far more fluid and very different to that held today.³⁵

Before making a conclusion from the evidence, before and contemporary with Catullus, it is worth considering if any light can be shed on the question of subjectivity by examining perceptions after Catullus.³⁶ Modern critics have various, often contradictory and partisan comments to make on this. Veyne argues that the *I* of ancient poets was different to that of later poets and that the elegist's *I* was recognised by ancient readers as non-biographical. He does not make quite clear, however, into which category Catullus falls.³⁷ Wyke states: 'From Catullus to Apuleius, ancient writers could claim that poetry was distinct from its poet and ancient readers could construe "sincere" expressions of personal passion as a function of poetic style.'³⁸ Lyne on the other hand, would remove Catullus from this equation: Catullus 'transforms the vague and largely artificial subjectivity of Hellenistic and Roman epigram into an intense personal involvement.'³⁹ Richlin adds that 'where Catullus wrote brash political poetry and highly real love poems,

Ovid chose to make love poetry into an escape from epic and politics, even hinting that the mistress he addressed was a figment of his imagination (*Am* 2.17.29).⁴⁰

Where many critics are in agreement, however, is on the fact that there is a definite difference in Catullus's verse to what had gone before. Lyne continues the comment quoted above: 'And more, in a series of poems, including epigrams, polymetrics and longer elegy, he dealt with one relationship, now lightly, now in great and original depth.'⁴¹ Otis comes to a similar conclusion, pointing out that no-one had talked about the psychological effect of unfaithfulness on the lover before, and no other similar cycle of poems exploring a single relationship has come to light earlier than Catullus.⁴² Gaisser agrees, adding: 'No other ancient poet, except Sappho, writes of emotions and personal experience with such intensity.'⁴³ This cycle is the basis of true lyric poetry, Miller argues, with an individual lyric poem defined as: 'a short poem of personal revelation, confession or complaint, which projects the image of an individual and highly self-reflexive subjective consciousness.'⁴⁴

The opinion of closer contemporaries to Catullus reflects no significant change in the perceptions of the poet as being generally the *I* of the poems. Wiseman points out that Ovid evidently assumed that his readers understood Catullus' love poetry as a confession of the author's adulteries.⁴⁵ Furthermore, 'St Augustine wasn't sure whether Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* were a true record or an invention,'⁴⁶ despite the fact that 'a skilled rhetorician like Augustine was doubtless capable of recognizing a fictional first person narrative.'⁴⁷ Apuleius, himself, lists in *Apologia* 10, the identities he believed lay behind such elegiac labels as Lesbia, Delia and Cynthia (respectively Clodia, Plania and Hostia). He also thought that Virgil's *Eclogues* concealed real people under fictitious names, suggesting that Virgil called himself Corydon and the slave-boy of Pollio, Alexis.⁴⁸ As Kennedy comments: 'From the textualist perspective, the passage of Apuleius, suggesting

a readiness to read not only the elegists but also Virgil's *Eclogues* as autobiographical, serves as testimony to a widespread ancient reading practice which treated poetry as confessional.⁴⁹

The growing use of communication through a written text was an important social development that is linked to the conflation of poet with poetry; while for Archilochus, Alcaeus and Sappho, the voice would still have been the main way of reaching an audience as for Hesiod, their texts survived mostly through the medium of writing.⁵⁰ The differentiation of biographical fact from poetic fiction became harder to discern with the passing of time and loss of personal knowledge of the poet. Thus while an earlier audience may have understood Archilochus to be writing as himself, but elaborating on his real circumstances, later audiences would have less facility to distinguish between true-to-life and true. Thus ironically, while the poet's life is increasingly read from his/her poems and a detailed personality created, the true person may have receded. So, as Habinek pointed out: 'If circulating a written text, as opposed to delivering an oral performance, increases an author's renown by extending it in both space and time, it also runs the risk of disconnecting an author from his text and under-cutting the importance of personal presence.'⁵¹

The circulation of a written text as opposed to recitation has obvious implications for subjective poetry, and it is only at this point that much of modern literary theory on the author becomes relevant; for example the comment of Wimsatt: 'The poem is not the critic's own and not the author's (it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to control it). The poem belongs to the public.'⁵² It also perhaps precisely this concern of losing control that in part explains the continued importance of using recitation for extending the poetic audience: 'By reciting his composition in public, the author seeks to claim the authoritative presence that is in danger of being dissipated by

the proliferation of writing.’⁵³ It may also explain the use of personal details; these are another way of attaching a poem to the poet; a poem containing an address to Lesbia or Calvus, for example, was easily identifiable as one belonging to Catullus.

Recitation also gave the author/enunciator the opportunity to use non-verbal communication techniques which should not be underestimated in their importance: As Cicero says: ‘For nature has assigned to every emotion a particular look and tone of voice and bearing of its own; and the whole of a person’s frame and every look on his face and utterance of his voice are like the strings of a harp, and sound according as they are struck by each successive emotion.’⁵⁴ Furthermore, as Cicero explains, the oral presentation can give a very different interpretation of the written words: ‘It is witty *dissimulatio* when in your whole style of speaking you keep up a solemn joke, your words at odds with your meaning.’⁵⁵ It is important, therefore to remember the various methods of distribution available to Catullus; recitation, informal publication such as sharing wax tablets, and formal publication of individual verses and collections of verses.⁵⁶ While we cannot possibly hope to reconstruct a performance of a poem, the possible political significance of these performances might be lost if no consideration is given to this aspect of circulating texts.

Recitation and oratory also highlight the Roman use of *persona* and its relation to self-address. I am not disputing the use of *persona* at Catullus’ time: as Wray says, “‘Persona’ is an authentically ancient critical term.”⁵⁷ Cicero is a good example of how a speaker may adopt a *persona* to make a point: he talks to Clodia, for example, under the *introducenda persona* of Appius Claudius Caecus in the *Pro Caelio*. And in so doing, ‘Cicero amply attests a contemporary self-consciousness about the act of speaking rhetorically under an assumed or “introduced” persona.’⁵⁸ What is significant is that the

use of *persona* is always completely apparent to the audience; Cicero makes it clear what ‘mask’ he is adopting. Furthermore, Cicero does not create a persona, ‘Cicero’.

It is interesting to note that the adoption of real masks is also clear in Ancient Greek vase decorations, where there is a distinction between mythical scenes and of dramatic performances of mythical scenes, between the ‘real’ (albeit mythical) and ‘performed.’⁵⁹ An example makes my point clearer: on an Attic red-figure pelike,⁶⁰ there is a piper in the elaborate stage costume of a piper, who is ‘a conventional symbol whose function is to indicate that what we have here is a performance in the theatre.’⁶¹ The maenad in the scene on the other hand has become ‘real’, signified by the lack of footwear and her naked female breast showing she is not a male chorus member in costume. The face, however, is awkwardly full-frontal, recalling the theatre to mind. We find therefore a clear signal from the artist that what we are looking at is a theatrical scene; the actor as the ‘narrator’ of this particular story is made clear.⁶² Depictions of satyr plays provide further examples. An Attic red-figure hydria has a similar mixture of ‘real’ figures and actors.⁶³ As Green comments: ‘The painter has made the artificiality of the masks evident as well as the typical drawers with a tail attached at the back and a *phallus* at the front.’⁶⁴ At the same time, there are also ‘real’ satyrs and other figures on the same vases. Other vases include clues such as theatre columns behind figures, platforms, and indications of masks.⁶⁵ In all these cases, the artist is making clear the appropriate audience response.

Traditional masks allowed Greek dramatists to use stock characters familiar to their audiences, and which conditioned the audience response; the audience easily recognised ‘the slave’, ‘the old man’, and knew what to expect from them.⁶⁶ Indeed dramas very much centred around these familiar characters.⁶⁷ Archaeology reveals that the Romans showed knowledge and interest about masks, and they were used to decorate theatres, such as Augustus’ Theatre of Marcellus and the theatre of Catullus’ Verona, built under

Augustus. Roman dramatists such as Plautus adopted the stock characters, but no longer needed their defining mask.⁶⁸ The familiarity of these stock characters allowed orators and writers to assume such *persona* in the knowledge that their audience would quickly pick up on the clues and react accordingly; as mentioned above, once Cicero had signalled he was wearing the ‘mask’ (*persona*) of old man Claudius, his audience knew what to expect.⁶⁹

Recent work on Roman satire has suggested that satirists adopt masks, such as the angry man, in conjunction with adopting a *persona*, when they speak in the first person.⁷⁰ What is important is that the writer signals clearly to the audience that he is doing this – just as Cicero in his speech speaks as ‘I, Cicero’ and ‘I, Appius Claudius Pulcher’. This use of *persona* with an audience tendency to read poetry autobiographically sometimes resulted in the signals of *persona* being missed.⁷¹ It is also true, as Wray points out, that Roman adoption of the *persona* is not complicated: ‘the Ciceronian speaker cannot be said to stand in a relation of “aesthetic distance” or critical detachment toward his speech performances under assumed personae.’⁷² The modern interpreter runs the risk of being overly sophisticated: if in *Satire* 1.5, the journey to Brundisium, we distinguish between Horace, satirist and friend of Maecenas, and Horace the character, also friend of Maecenas, we may have Horace the satirist presenting a situation where ‘we might laugh at the vulgar slanging match between the two rustic buffoons and at the ‘fussy host’ who nearly burns down his own house – or we might find the supercilious and patronising attitude of Maecenas’ clique obnoxious.’⁷³ It is inconceivable that Horace really intended his audience to think the latter, suggesting that he did not anticipate such a reaction from his audience.⁷⁴ Horace is no Chaucer, and there is no hint here that Maecenas may not be a *verray, parfit gentil knight*.⁷⁵

What does add complication is that orators in their legal oratory often sought plausibility (*fides*) and appropriateness (*decorum*) rather than the portrayal of real

sentiments.⁷⁶ Cicero is typical. This has led to an argument that a sense of sincerity was due to style rather than any connection with real events. Cicero, however, is very aware of the problems that may ensue from possible contradictions or being tied to comments made in defence speeches; he was aware that such comments could be taken as having a very close connection with real events, and so had to be handled carefully, for example, by not publishing them.⁷⁷ Rudd has also commented that: ‘no doubt it [sincerity] *was* a function of style, but...Cicero, Horace, and Quintilian all agreed that the best way to make one’s style emotionally persuasive was to feel the emotions oneself.... There must be some relation, however obscure, between technique and personality.’⁷⁸ Poetry and oratory also require different levels of credibility, but it is interesting to note that in his discussion on this, Longinus questions only hyperbolic uses of fictional visualisation (*phantasia*), such as the Furies haunting Orestes, against the standard of verisimilitude.⁷⁹

The audience is a key factor here. As Webb explains, *phantasia* is a ‘two-fold process whereby the orator himself visualises his subject-matter and thereby makes his audience see it through his words.’⁸⁰ The authorial intention through *enargeia* (vividness) is clearly to implant a particular image in the mind of his listeners, and to govern reaction to it, through the vividness of the image. Webb also comments that the emotions most often mentioned in Latin rhetorical treatises in connection with *enargeia* are pity (*miseratio* or *miser cordia*) and indignation (*indignatio*), two emotions very relevant to readers of Catullus, as well as audiences of forensic oratory. What is particularly revealing, however, is that ‘on the whole, the authors of treatises [on rhetorical use of *enargeia*] tend to speak as if the impact of vivid speech were entirely unproblematic, and as if the audience were bound to be affected as described.’⁸¹ Webb explains this in terms of imagination: ‘The concept of the imagination referred to by Cicero, Quintilian, and even Longinus, is not the free, creative one of modern poetics which functions as a semi-divine,

creative impulse in its own right, and whose products need only be internally consistent, without being caused or aimed at the exterior world. Rather, the ancient rhetoricians envisage a ‘mimetic’ imagination based on a pre-existing reality and bounded by accepted truths and values which ensure that the orator could to some extent predict the reactions of his audience.’⁸²

Catullus’ own poetry shows that he had been educated in the standard fashion in rhetoric and that he took an open interest in the oratory of his friend, Calvus, an orator of considerable repute.⁸³ There is a discernible intention in many poems that Catullus was seeking to persuade and win his audience (in part himself) over to his viewpoint, and in these he made clear use of techniques common to rhetoric.⁸⁴ In writing poems that were purposefully true to life, he was as assured of his audience’s reaction as any orator, and of their feeling the emotions he intended to arouse. That such techniques were not restricted to oratory is clear from the transference of the use of *enargeia* from oratory to history: as Levene commented, ‘*Enargeia* often performs a central role here: the vivid description breaks down the barriers between the audience and the characters and encourages the former to share the viewpoint, and hence to empathise with, the latter.’⁸⁵

It is clear therefore that Catullus wrote in an era where to use *I* (or other forms of self-address) in a poem would be interpreted by the reader/audience as a reference to Catullus himself, unless there was a clear indication that *I* was someone else. Furthermore, Catullus would expect his wider reader/audience to believe as real events of his own life, the events described by or associated with that *I*. His friends would know far more about these events than his wider readership, but the main facts of his life may have been common knowledge. No doubt there would have been speculation about the identity of ‘Lesbia’, akin to celebrity gossip today. Whether Catullus himself questioned or even

recognised such constraints is unknown; what is important is that it seems fairly clear that these were the conditions in which he was writing, and which his critic must consider.⁸⁶

Catullus was also aware of the potential distribution for written texts. The survival of literature from Archaic Greece to Republican Rome extended audiences not simply geographically; whereas Alcaeus was clearly writing for his peers, Catullus is explicit in his hopes that his poetry would last more than one age. This means he must at least in part have written for an audience not as familiar with the context of his verses than his immediate circle of friends, who were no doubt his primary audience. This allows a poem addressed to a contemporary narratee, for example Juventius, (or second person 'tu') to also address a wider, secondary audience, allowing for possibilities of dramatic irony.

In understanding how this intention may have affected his writing, we must be clear, however, whom Catullus considered as his wider audience. When Catullus thought in terms of more than one age, it is not unreasonable to suggest that he had in mind something similar to the survival of the works of Archilochus or Sappho to his own day, that is, poems with a sizeable critical corpus along with them, and in the context of the other literary works of their time. He would have been right in this assumption too; over two hundred years later, Apuleius knew (or thought he knew) enough to see beyond the pseudonym, Lesbia. St Isidore (7th Century AD) could quote the dedicatory epigram to Cinna's *Smyrna*. What Catullus is unlikely to have anticipated is the trick of fate that ensured his poetry's survival to the present day in virtual isolation of either the poetic works of his contemporaries or critical commentaries, and to a society deceptively similar, but radically different to his own.⁸⁷ While many of his poems might have been written with a wider audience in mind, therefore, his critic must make a distinction between the wider Roman audience he had in mind, and the modern audience, whom he most likely did not.

Catullus' own audience frequently figures within the poems themselves. While such individuals as Aurelius and Flavius are unknown, many are known political figures, active in Catullus' *milieu*: Caesar, Mamurra, Pompey, Memmius, Piso, Vatinius, Torquatus, and Calvus are just a few major figures of his day. Identifying Lesbia with Clodia Metelli would add her brother, Clodius, husband, Metellus, and lover, Caelius Rufus. That Catullus, like Archilochus, names real people is a feature insufficiently explained by those who assert that 'Catullus' is purely a poetic fiction. As Wiseman says: 'The fact that he refers to and addresses by name identifiable historical personages means that, other things being equal, the "Catullus" he refers to and addresses by name should be no less real a figure.' He continues: 'Not that we have to believe everything he says about himself, but we are not automatically prevented from believing anything at all.'⁸⁸ Similarly, Tatum argues that 'the poetic identity of Hortalus...cannot be completely severed from the historical Hortensius Hortalus, to whom [poem lxv] makes reference.'⁸⁹

It is clear from the poems themselves, that at least some of his readers did take Catullus the poet to be Catullus of the poems.⁹⁰ What it is difficult to understand, however, due to the poetic thrust and feint of poem xvi, is whether Aurelius and Furius⁹¹ were wrong in doing this or rather wrong in how they did this (that is, they do not know how to read sophisticated verse about kisses)? Does Catullus charge them with wrongly conflating poet with poetry or coming up with a false accusation of effeminacy against Catullus, resulting from their poor reading? These are two quite different things. If the latter, Catullus is arguing that poems can be *mollis* (soft, effeminate), while he, the poet, can remain masculine, and aggressively so where necessary, as evident in this poem. So, for example, 'soft' poems may talk of endless kisses, but a sophisticated audience would not interpret them as meaning that this is all Catullus is capable of doing, whether with Lesbia or Juventius, or that they imply loss of masculine control.⁹² Likewise, in poem l

Catullus can talk of his evening of poetry-making with Calvus in sexually charged terms, but only an ignorant reader would compare this to the activity he infers in poem lvii 7 about Caesar and Mamurra (*uno in lectulo erudituli ambo*: ‘Two dilettantes on one little couch.’).

Catullus’ poem playfully and deliberately undercuts attempts to interpret exactly what he is saying. If the situation is not that Furius and Aurelius have misread the kiss poems, what is he actually saying about the kisses (or whatever else we take ‘molliculi’ to refer to) that make them ‘parum pudicum’? Why should the ‘pius poeta’ be ‘castus’, like a good Roman wife, and what poems exploit the freedom not to be?⁹³ How is it ‘pius’ to write pornographic verses? If he is warning them not to believe what is in the poem, where does this leave the current poem; is it a fiction and is his threat a fiction as well? There is also the question of how the promised violent retaliation or verses that excite desire, whether pathic or active, in hairy old Romans, fit with the concept of a ‘castus poeta’?⁹⁴

These hairy Roman men may be viewed as representatives, however flawed, of the moralistic tradition of Rome that attacked lack of self-control as effeminate. This charge was significant as he lived in a society, where the élite were supposed to be fully in control of their actions and where ‘[a] Roman, governed by a harsh ethos, simply could not afford to ‘turn the other cheek’ and expect to maintain his position in society.’⁹⁵ We can, however, mistake the ideal of manly Roman self-control for the reality of contemporary, Hellenized Rome, as Catullus reveals through these flawed representatives whose rustic appearance belies their urban morals. The historian Sallust, Catullus’ contemporary, too frequently complains about the degeneracy of contemporary life from this ideal, often blaming Greek culture for undermining Roman austerity.

It is likely, therefore, that poem xvi is revealing underlying tensions in Catullus’ society.⁹⁶ As Wray has pointed out, there were two forms of masculine behaviour by the

end of the Republic: ‘the coexistence of two divergent models of masculine behavior: one connected ideologically with Roman *mos maiorum* and that can be roughly characterized as archaic and “traditional,” the other connected with the prestige of Hellenistic culture and more or less “cosmopolitan”.⁹⁷ It is possible that Catullus is exploring both models in poem xvi; he is the aggressive traditional Roman, exercising his rights over someone who has transgressed against him, as a *pius* poet in an Archilochean sense⁹⁸ and a writer of highly stylised, Hellenistic verse, and so *pius* to Callimachean ideals.⁹⁹ This is not to say that this charge of being *mollis* did not require very careful handling, as it was still no doubt highly effective. Catullus’ rebuttal is accordingly put in unambiguously aggressive masculine terms, and in effect caps the attack of Furius and Aurelius; they accuse him of being *mollis*, a general derogatory term, and he reacts by using the strongest insults that refer to pathic sexual roles.¹⁰⁰

His first and last lines are therefore undeniably aggressive and masculine, but this does not necessary mean that Catullus conforms elsewhere with expected masculine behaviour. On one level, it may be that he is deliberately fudging the issue, as he must have been aware that he was vulnerable to the charge of effeminacy in poems such as xi where he inverts the male/female descriptors; Lesbia is the plough (male), he the flower (female).¹⁰¹ To a careful reader, the aggressive pose is undercut by poem xvi itself and by references in other poems, such as poem xxviii. Here, he humorously describes himself on the receiving end of such a threat, despite this being supposedly the ultimate insult.¹⁰² His response therefore is more akin to that of Horace in his satires, where he too ducks the question: ‘For if someone writes bad verses against someone, there is the law and a judge.’ He replied: ‘Quite right; if bad; but what if someone writes good verses praised by Caesar as judge?’¹⁰³

Humour is perhaps an underestimated aspect of poem xvi. There is humour in the poet turning the tables on Furius and Aurelius, and attacking *their* virility. Nor do we need to take Catullus' response literally as a severe castigation; this language could be a literary version of the phallic threat of a Priapus, an icon (both in two- and three-dimensional forms) that was common all over Rome and often the subject of humorous verse.¹⁰⁴ It is also worth considering how we interpret the incredibly scurrilous songs sung by Caesar's soldiers at his triumphs before we too readily take sexual insults at their face.¹⁰⁵ Archilochus too gives us an example of a poet who lampooned his friends.¹⁰⁶ It appears therefore that the same subject matter could be used for devastating political attack, as well as for far less serious public joshing. Furius and Aurelius also appear in other poems as friends of Catullus, and it is reasonable to suppose that they knew Catullus, adding a further dimension to the poem; it was their lack of literary appreciation of poems on such topics that Catullus castigated. They knew of the real events of his life, so a charge of reading poems as biography becomes rather meaningless; it's the style of his verse, that is dealing with love and emotions, that may have been effeminate in their minds not the precise content. They had as little notion about literature as Suffenus, Varus' friend (poem xxii).¹⁰⁷

Griffin reminds us too that we should beware of placing too much on one poem: 'we see the poet evading an irritating charge by means of a deft, handy and humorous literary expedient, which does not seem to lend itself to being treated as the touch stone for his whole poetic output.'¹⁰⁸ Rudd points out that in one poem, Ovid expresses a similar warning to his readers: 'Believe me – my habits are unlike my poem. My life is respectable, it's my Muse that enjoys the fun,' but in another says: 'It is experience that inspires the work; obey the expert bard.'¹⁰⁹ Poets were perfectly capable of having their cake and eating it; elsewhere, when Catullus refers to Simonides' poems, as Adler has

pointed out, he conflates the emotions related in the verses with the poet's own physical signs of emotions: he wants consolation 'maestius lacrimis Simonideis', that is, solace sadder than Simonides' tears, not sadder than the poems of Simonides.¹¹⁰ We also know that Catullus' friends are portrayed as playing literary pranks on Catullus; Calvus, for example, sent him an appalling poetry collection as a joke (poem xiv). Poem xvi, therefore, cannot be interpreted simply as Catullus rebuking his friends for extrapolating his life from the poems. I understand it as saying either that Furius and Aurelius have got the wrong message about Catullus from the poems or that they are deliberately misreading the poems to have a jibe at Catullus.

Earlier, I asked the question which poems exploit the freedom not to be *castus*. There is perhaps one example, poem I, which is openly erotic; Catullus lies languishing in bed, tossing and turning, as if in desire for his lover. That 'lover' is Licinius Calvus, but the activity that has provoked this behaviour is not sex but writing verses. Catullus therefore is *castus*, while the poem is provokingly titillating and with clear sexual overtones. The relationship described, moreover, is that between two young men, and therefore does not come within acceptable male-to-male relationships; one of these young men could be accused of effeminacy (xvi, 8 *molliculi*) and lack of decency (xvi, 8 *parum pudici*). Both, therefore, are qualities of the poem, but not necessarily of the author. The dominant male Roman reader may either find acceptable titillation in the description of two attractive apparently receptive men, or take secret pleasure in the positive portrayal of reciprocal effeminate behaviour between two adult males.

It is my contention, then, that it would be expected by at least his contemporary and near-contemporary audience and critics that any first person usage (and corresponding second and third person self-address) in the poems could be interpreted as referring to Catullus, himself, unless there were clear indicators (thought not necessarily clear to the

modern audience) within the poem that he was assuming a mask or the role of a narrator, as for example, poem iv. Even here, there is nothing to rule out Catullus using his own experience in writing the poem, but the use of the narrator is a clear indicator that the contents of the poem cannot be taken literally.¹¹¹ Secondly, his ancient audience on the whole, would have been inclined to read as biographical fact the events ascribed to ‘Catullus’ in the poems. His intimate audience, through greater knowledge, would have been understood that not everything said by Catullus as narrator actually happened as he records, and that there could be a range of truth, from embellished reality (*res gestae*) to where the story that Catullus tells of himself is true to life, but actually fiction (*res ut gestae*).¹¹² His modern audience has the same understanding, but lacks the knowledge to differentiate.

SPONTANEITY, IMPROVISATION AND COMPOSITION

*Everyman’s work, whether it be literature or music or pictures or architecture or anything else, is always a portrait of himself.*¹¹³

*You speak of the ‘laborious versification’ of Catullus, whom I should have called the least laborious, and the most spontaneous in his godlike and birdlike melody, of all lyricists known to me except Sappho and Shelley.*¹¹⁴

Once it has been agreed that Catullus either used, or anticipated that his audience would think that he had used, the subjective *I* as related in some way to his own life, the next issue is whether poems crafted with such skill can be considered spontaneous reflections of the poet’s life and emotions or whether they are more mirrors of real life, once true but very much redrafted – or as Newman describes two stages; first the experience, then the poem of the experience.¹¹⁵ Of course lack of spontaneity does not inevitably mean lack of personal experience. Personal experience and immediate inspiration are not inextricably linked; as Wiseman has argued, ‘But you can use personal experience in your work without necessarily having it pour out in profuse strains of unpremeditated art. And

contrariwise, a poet who is a careful and conscious artist in the Callimachean tradition can still be exercising that art on material which has been lived and not just imagined.’¹¹⁶

Rudd has also pointed out that simplicity in a poem does not necessarily reflect spontaneity: ‘the apparent simplicity may be the result of intense effort and careful revision. A successful poet, says Horace (*Epist* II.2.124), will give the impression of playing but will suffer agony in the process: *ludentis speciem dabit et torquebitur*.’¹¹⁷ The other side of the coin is that artifice and stylistic adornment may give an erroneous impression of falseness and lack of sincerity.¹¹⁸

The complex technical art of lyric with its metrical intricacies seems to argue strongly against spontaneity – both in Catullus’ own poems and in those of his model, Sappho – and against the final version of the poem to any great extent resembling that written in the heat of the moment. So, for example, Veyne: ‘In order to fabricate a work of art, one has to submit to artistic laws and imperious pragmatic demands, not to speak of the conventions of some genre. Any autobiographical materials come out of this process so metamorphosized, as a rule, that even their own father would not recognise them.’¹¹⁹ Equally, for Newman, the second stage is vital: ‘Groans of anguish, shrieks of pain, shouts of laughter, are all ‘subjective’ and ‘sincere’: they are not literature, and above all they are not poetry.’¹²⁰ Metrical virtuosity could, however, be similar to the skill required in composing or improvising complex music, and it is useful to consider what light this comparison can shed on the question of spontaneous composition in response to sudden inspiration.

It is striking how several composers appear to have achieved such a degree of technical virtuosity that they were capable of more or less fully forming a hugely complex work in their minds before writing it down more or less mechanically, or of improvising hugely complex works from bare sketches, even for first performances: while it may have

taken some years to perfect the craft, once learnt, each work did not in itself require those years as part of the composition process. Likewise, Catullus may have distilled the years of careful study of metre into a rapidly composed poem. As Quinn said: ‘We have, in short, to postulate a poet endowed with the kind of technical skills and virtuosity which the intensive study of the masterpieces of ancient literature, Roman rhetorical education, and the diligent practice of verse could produce.’¹²¹

Mozart, in particular, is famous for his extraordinary methods: it is recorded that he sometimes played billiards to aid his concentration. During the tranquillity that the game gave him, he was able to arrange his ideas sufficiently to be able not just to write down the music very quickly, but to do this in public, amidst the disruption of general conversation. It is often forgotten that Mozart performed phenomenal feats of improvisation, and that he was ‘prized by his contemporaries first as an improviser, second as a pianist, and only third as a composer.’¹²² Similarly, at Leipzig, Bach wrote, rehearsed and performed a cantata each month for twenty-seven years, in between teaching, training, and playing, tuning and testing the organ. His sons, who no doubt assisted him in this, provide the testimony ‘that, however, complex their papa’s written-down fugues may seem, they were mere tabloid splashes when set beside the towering infernos of sound he plucked, ready-formed in invertible counterpoint, out of his imagination when improvising in the Thomaskirche.’¹²³

A more recent example, Philip Heseltine (also known as Peter Warlock), was similar to Catullus and his friends in that he was more interested in highly crafted occasional compositions and songs rather than full symphonic pieces.¹²⁴ Regarded as a fine and precise technician, there is an account of one spontaneous composition that has many striking echoes with the account Catullus gives of his evening of light verse-making with Calvus (poem 1). Warlock’s friend, the poet Bruce Blunt, records how ‘The Fox’ came into being as a poem, with musical accompaniment within twenty-four hours.

‘...I can, however, tell you the whole story of ‘The Fox’.

Philip was staying with me in Bramdean in the summer of 1930, and we spent a long evening in ‘The Fox’, which is the local pub.

When we got back home, Philip went almost straight to bed, but I stayed up and opened a bottle of Chablis (what an inadvisable addition to a lot of beer) and wrote the words of ‘The Fox’.

As I did not go upstairs till about 3.0, I thought that Philip would probably be down before me, so I left the poem on the table with a note to the effect that I thought it was unsuitable for setting to music on account of the shortness of the lines.

When I got down at about noon next day, I found Philip sitting at the table with music MS paper in front of him and he was working at the song. He said ‘On the contrary, my dear sir, I think that this is admirably suited for setting to music’.

We were going to Salisbury that afternoon and, when we got there, Philip hired a room with a piano at some music shop, played and whistled the thing over, and finished the song on the spot. So ‘The Fox’, words and music, was conceived and completed within about eighteen hours, which may, or may not, be a record.’¹²⁵

It has been said of ‘The Fox’: ‘This song...is considered by many musicians to be Warlock’s finest achievement.’¹²⁶ This incident is of particular interest, therefore, as it shows spontaneity of composition, both poetic and musical, inspired by a real life situation, with the final product of both highly talented individuals reflecting very closely the initial drafts. While it cannot be proven that Catullus composed with similar felicity, it does reassert the possibility that poems that appear to describe his emotions may have been written closer to the event and even possibly more in the throes of emotion than allowed by some critics.

Furthermore, it also draws attention to the aesthetic worth of the poems that Calvus and Catullus were capable of achieving in their evenings of literary entertainment, as Catullus describes in poem 1. These have tended to be dismissed outright as being likely to bear any resemblance to the poems Catullus published either through the collection or by other forms of circulation. Quinn, for example, marginalised the ‘versiculi’ as ‘scraps of verse, tossed off by talented idle young men stimulated by intimacy and the exhilaration of

outdoing one another in technical competence.’¹²⁷ ‘The Fox’ shows, however, how an informal evening can lead to something of true artistic worth and suggests that some at least of the ‘nugae’ Catullus mentions could be the poems that we have in the collection and which may have required some careful polish, but no substantial redraft.¹²⁸

A letter of Pliny further supports this view. In advising Fuscus Salinator about a course of study, Pliny suggests that Fuscus seeks relaxation by writing poetry, and describes the sort of verse that might be written in a short time: ‘It is permissible, too, to seek relaxation in writing poetry, by which I mean not a long continuous poem (which can only be finished if one has plenty of leisure), but one of those short, polished sets of verses which make a break in your duties and responsibilities, however pressing. This is called light verse, but it sometimes brings its authors as much fame as serious work.’¹²⁹

There is a risk, however, that technical brilliance may somehow equal a lack of personal involvement: so for example, Wray in discussing Quinn’s view of Catullus points out that, ‘the poet – the true poet – was to be, in Quinn’s view (and perhaps in the view of most Catullan critics for the rest of the century), not a playful, performative and technically brilliant wordsmith in the manner of a Pope or a Pound, but rather an intensely personal maker of new meaning in the manner of Wordsworth and Stevens. The writing of genuine poetry, under this model, had to be a matter of deep, often painful involvement of the poet’s own personality rather than a matter of erudition, painstaking craft and intellectual delight.’¹³⁰ My conclusion would be somewhere in between these two: Catullus is certainly at times playful and performative, at others more emotionally involved (at least in first draft), but always technically brilliant and intellectually involved. While my comparison with composing music suggests that many poems may have begun life this way, this is not applicable to all – on Catullus’ own evidence. He speaks of the nine years

that Cinna's *Smyrna* has taken to come into being.¹³¹ This work is more comparable with poems such as lxiv, where painstaking craft would have been required as well as brilliance.

Another argument against spontaneity is the level of allusion and *doctrina* in a poem, where high levels, it might be suggested, are less likely to reflect real incidents or emotions. As with metre, however, once a level of learning has been achieved, each poem may represent to a large extent that collective learning rather than any specific research. Imitation in itself also does not necessarily imply lack of sincerity: Catullus' poem li is a good example of where Catullus shows much imitation of Sappho while creating something very new and very personal to Catullus. The poem to Catullus' brother is another case in point: As Zetzel has argued, the poem to Catullus' brother need not be seen as 'a vehicle for the display of allusion' rather than a poem commemorating brother's death.¹³² He usefully compares the allusion and learning in one of Pound's poems to emphasis the point that learned allusion can be used in a poem with a direct connection with contemporary affairs:

'Memnon, Memnon, that lady
Who used to walk amongst us
With such gracious uncertainty
Is now wedded to a British householder
Lugete, Veneres, Lugete, Cupidinesque.'

Once it is accepted that some poems might be more or less spontaneous reflections of a true event or emotion, then the use of self address to explore the event or emotion becomes more of a possibility. Adler, for example, has reacted against the idea of Catullus using the poetic *persona* in the context of self-address simply for the sake of dramatic irony, suggesting that 'self-division may be not only a poet's device for achieving ironic distance from his *persona*, but also the substance of his knowledge of himself as a man.'¹³³ She continues: 'In the latter case, it would evidently be misleading to read as poetic irony what is intended as direct self-revelation.'¹³⁴

Poem viii is a good example of where Catullus' self address and use of the second person creates in effect a dialogue with himself.¹³⁵ In this poem, there are arguably two distinct voices; the irrational lover and the rational speaker, both of which reflect the poet as I have argued above. As the poem progresses, the rational speaker loses his detachment as he thinks of his *puella* ('girlfriend'), and then reasserts his desire for self-control at the end of the poem. This apparent loss of control within a poem possibly suggests that at least the first substantial draft was written spontaneously. This is not to say that Catullus, himself, remained unaware of the irony of the latter part of the poem (far from being the desolate figure he portrays, Lesbia will have no problem finding a substitute for Catullus) or the lack of consistency with first person usage breaking in to the third person address at line 5; these are features he clearly retained when considering the poem in a more dispassionate mood.

It is then interesting to consider how the two voices reflect two aspects of one character and whether it is the masculine self-control (*potens*) arguing with the feminine emotionality (*impotens*). This would add another layer of significance to the poems as Greene points out: 'The conflict in the poem between the feminine emotionality and manly self-control must be understood in the context of Roman moralising discourse, with its anxieties about gender, social status, and political power.'¹³⁶

Considering spontaneity of composition adds support to the view that the poems about Lesbia might be seen as 'in part the poet's attempt to control over-whelming feelings by distancing himself from them and presenting them objectively',¹³⁷ In line with this view, Commager asks, 'whether the poems might not have an equally important function as instruments of discovery and control, written not so much for Lesbia's benefit as Catullus' own.'¹³⁸ If this is combined with the notion of spontaneity, then we can consider that some of the poems were written in the heat of the moment, and through the initial

composition process itself and in further revising, Catullus sought control and understanding, which allowed him to create a poem which becomes more general in its experience and appeal; it is still Catullus, it is still his experience, but with a dispassionate intellectual analysis applied, which may be why we have poems of incredibly strong personal emotion and intensity, while achieving a universality of appeal to a broad range of readers, and the sense of a 'Catullus', separate to the poet.¹³⁹

In discussing Catullus' poetry, I shall therefore make these assumptions. Firstly, that the voice 'Catullus' is that of the poet as himself, unless the reader is otherwise directed, and other names used are aliases or the names of real people, with no combination of named fictional characters and real people. The alias, Lesbia, I shall argue in chapter three, stands for the historical figure, Clodia, a sister of Clodius. Secondly, that events described may reflect actual events, but not necessarily so; the poems' *I* being identified with the poet, Catullus, does not mean the poems are necessarily autobiographical, although Catullus would expect his wider contemporary audience to read them as such. As a corollary to this, I would add that where the poem is clearly fictional, some aspects may be based on real events. Thirdly, the use of complicated metres does not rule out an element of spontaneity in composition. Poems dashed off in high spirits with *Calvus*, as described in poem 1, might therefore be included among the poems in the collection we have. This is not to say, however, that Catullus did not carefully redraft his poems. Fourthly, the *I* of the poems being identified with the poet does not mean that poems cannot contain self-irony or be sophisticated in their approach or playful with their audience. Related to this is the fact that our understanding of what Catullus is saying may be illusory; we are not his friend, are not party to his in-jokes or conversational games and are not sufficiently *dicax et urbanus* to know where he drew the line, for example, in the use of obscenity.

All of which means that, ‘we find a poet who is superbly direct and yet highly complex, spontaneous and ingenious, yet self critical and perceptive, intense and yet ironic, serious and yet unpretentious.’¹⁴⁰ It is no wonder therefore that Catullus had a major impact on literature, and one aspect of his poetry that may have taken on a literary life of its own is his depiction of a love-stricken poet, enamoured of a strong and fickle woman. It is possible that Catullus in writing of himself, did create a ‘love-poet persona’ for others, such as Propertius, to use, and this may in part have created the confusion of where the first person self-identified persona first existed, and who first used it. In addressing himself, Catullus meant himself, but the character ‘written’ took on a separate literary role. That this feature, rather than the politically-inspired aspects of his poetry, was to prove more enduring is in part due to era in which he lived, and the very different era that followed under the principate of Augustus.¹⁴¹ In Chapter Two, I shall explore more deeply into the political and social context of Catullus, examining what we can find out about his life and how this may have impacted on his poetry, and how his poetry may have impacted on that life.

Endnotes

¹ Calame (1995, 58).

² Hesiod *Theogony* 27-8.

³ Pace Miller (1994, 35) who objects to Archilochus being described as a lyricist rather than an iambist as he does not write within the rules of lyric.

⁴ Tracey (1965, 23): ‘The world of the lyric poet is himself first of all.’

⁵ Calame (1995, 8).

⁶ Calame (1995, 45).

⁷ Calame (1995, 25).

⁸ Virgil’s use of sphragis is interesting here: At the end of *Georgics* IV (563-6), he names himself and speaks of his earlier literary works, namely the *Eclogues* and quotes the first line of *Eclogues* I. The Virgil of the sphragis is therefore very much identified with Virgil the person and poet. Virgil, is not beyond however, playing with the identity of the extradiscursive poet; in *Eclogue* 5, Menalcas is presented as the author of *Eclogues* 2 and 3.

⁹ Burnett (1983, 1).

¹⁰ Burnett (1983, 1).

¹¹ Burnett (1983, 2). Cf Miller (1994, 35): ‘The figure of Archilochus, far from representing the awakening of the individual consciousness once the mists of epic have cleared, is of a piece with the same oral tradition as that found in heroic poetry, though he is practicing a different genre whose function is parallel but not opposed to epic.’

¹² It seems also that there is not usually interchange of voice within a poem. In comedy, the chorus is immediately identifiable and remains the voice throughout, with the logical and occasional exceptions in the *parabasis* of early comedy, where the poet's voice might be expected. Later, as we see in Pindar for example, the choral first-person statements are distinguished quite clearly by the subject matter, and there is little chance of the audience mistaking the voice of the poem. Lefkowitz (1991, 20): 'We know immediately who the chorus is and what it is doing because the chorus in every case tell us; neither costumes or a synopsis of actions is required to complete the picture.'

¹³ Slings (1990, 16).

¹⁴ Slings (1990, 14). An example is the fact that unlike Plato who avoids personal intrusion, Xenophon includes himself in the *Symposium* with Socrates. He would historically have been eight years old. Calame (1995, 25) also considers this idea in his discussion of the conflation of fiction with real experience: 'Burnett [1983] sometimes forgets to mention that the fiction constructed in the poem is based on an actual experience and that it generally has a precise role to play during the occasion on which the poem is performed.'

¹⁵ Similarly Bitel (in Kahane/Laird (Eds) 2001, 140) has argued that rhetoricians divided their narrative into three: *historia*, the narrative of past facts (*gesta res*); *argumentum* the narrative of fictional events which could have happened (*ficta res quae tamen fieri potest*); and *fabula*, the narrative of events clearly untrue and unlike true events (*quae neque versa neque veri similes continet res*).

¹⁶ Calame (1995, 25). *Jane Eyre* is interesting as presenting the opposite situation: Entitled *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*, Charlotte Brontë clearly signifies the narrator as Jane Eyre, and separate to herself, yet bases much of Jane's school life on her own experiences at the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge.

¹⁷ Rankin (1978, 86).

¹⁸ Burnett (1983, 107).

¹⁹ Lefkowitz (1991, 71): Pindar 'drew on the tradition of first person statements in epic and lyric poetry, where the poet speaks not as a professional but as a private citizen, thus incorporating the personal into the official statements of his odes.'

²⁰ Assumptions are, however, too easily made about modern literature; Wiseman pointed out (in Galinsky (Ed) 1992, 60) how Henry Miller's narrator in *Tropic of Capricorn* was assumed erroneously to be other than the author himself. Jonathan Bates in his plenary session at the 2000 CA conference suggested that Ted Hughes went beyond the text of *Alcestis* in his translation of lines that have some personal resonance with his life with Sylvia Plath: for example at the points where Admetus says: 'I shall miss you, Alcestis, not for a moment, but for the rest of life' and 'If I had the powers of Orpheus I would bring you back.' Audiences today may also not be as so sophisticated as the poet; Robert Pack (New York Times, 28 Sept. 1986, p47; Gaisser 1993, note to p3) describes how betrayed one of his audience felt when she found his poem about the death of a brother in a hunting accident to be a 'lie'.

²¹ Burnett (1983, 6).

²² Lefkowitz (1991, 114).

²³ Plutarch *Instit. Lac.* 34.239b.

²⁴ Critias Fr. 44 in Aelian, *Varia Historia* X, 13.

²⁵ Lefkowitz (1991, 118).

²⁶ Gibson (in Kahane/Laird (Eds) 2001, 74).

²⁷ Cf The beginning of *Casina* where Plautus's character 'talks to the camera.' Also comparable is the 'dear reader' addresses in Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë. It is interesting that in Jane Austen, where we have the author-narrator speaking of events concerning her characters not her, this can heighten irony, while reminding the reader that they are reading a novel, while in *Jane Eyre*, it is Jane who speaks of her own position, and the result is heightened emotion and the reader is drawn in, despite the narrator being part of the fiction.

²⁸ Lefkowitz (1991, 157) says Horace considered Pindar 'not in the way that Pindar might have represented himself, but as the Alexandrians saw him' and that Theocritus asks for payment in a way that is reminiscent of the scholia's gloss on Pindar, not on the actual poems.

²⁹ Krostenko (2001, 159); Cicero *Pis.* 70.

³⁰ Cicero *De leg.* 1.4.

³¹ Griffin (1985, 191).

³² Suetonius *Iul.* 6.1.

³³ As Wiseman (1987, 261) points out: 'This proximity of the historian's practice to that of a poet is...a valid indicator of the position of historiography in the Greco-Roman intellectual world.'

³⁴ Lefkowitz (1991, 152) quoting *Ion* 534 B.

³⁵ There is also the issue of whether Greek elements in a Roman text equals fiction. Griffin (1985, 2f) has made a strong case against this view, showing that 'Roman life, and particularly, the life of luxury and

pleasure, was so strongly Hellenistic in colouring and material that no simply division into 'Greek' and 'Roman' elements is possible.'

³⁶ I have concentrated on Greek literature as being – despite Quinn (1969) – much more influential than Roman literature. Livius Andronicus was very much in the old Greek tradition, while Ennius showed awareness of Callimachean ideals and Laevius used the characteristically Alexandrian title of *Erotopaegnia*. It is true that Roman poets wrote love epigrams which bear similarities to Catullan themes: Lutatius Catulus wrote about an errant heart and Roscius being more handsome than a god; Valerius Aedituus wrote of being tongue-tied in love, and Porcius Licinus used the same image as Aedituus of the flame of love lighting up his surroundings. But the glaring omission that Quinn makes in the discussion of common lover motifs is Catullus' far greater debt to Sappho, whose poem (31V) he more or less translated in poem 51. Crowther (1971b, 249) summarises the actual revolution: 'The poets grouped around Catullus who may be considered revolutionary, not in fundamentally changing the traditions of poetry, but in bringing to prominence what in many cases had existed before.'

³⁷ Veyne (1983).

³⁸ Wyke (1987, 28). Cf James (2003, 6): 'The elite Roman audience of both elegy and lyric fully understood the fluid relationship between poetry and reality.'

³⁹ Lyne (1972, 36).

⁴⁰ Richlin (1992b, 32).

⁴¹ Lyne (1972, 36).

⁴² Otis (1965, 2-7).

⁴³ Gaisser (1993, 2).

⁴⁴ Miller (1994, 1).

⁴⁵ Ovid *Tristia* 2.427-30: *in quibus ipse suum fassus adulterium est*. Wiseman (in Galinsky (Ed) 1992, 60).

⁴⁶ Wiseman (in Galinsky (Ed) 1992, 60); St Augustine *Civitas Dei* 18.18 *aut indicavit aut finxit*.

⁴⁷ Carver (in Kahane/Laird (Eds) 2001, 170). It is also interesting to note that while Apuleius' work was far more obviously fiction than Catullus' poems, Carver (p174) adds: 'what emerges most clearly, perhaps, is the persistently autobiographical response to the speaking *I* of the Prologue.'

⁴⁸ Apuleius *Apol.* 10.

⁴⁹ Kennedy (1993, 89).

⁵⁰ Miller (1994, 1f) explains that in the fifth century BC, Greek schools began to teach reading, and in the last decades of the century, there are the first mentions of a trade in books. By the end of the century, there were the first archives in Athens. First compilations of poems were made in the mid-Hellenic period, and in the second quarter of the fourth century, Lycurgus established authoritative versions of Classical tragedy.

⁵¹ Habinek (1998, 103).

⁵² Wimsatt (1958, 75) quoted in Galinsky (1992, 5).

⁵³ Habinek (1998, 107). Cf. The modern Spanish poet, Federico García Lorca, who said that he preferred to give readings of his poems, rather than publish them, for reasons that he put in a letter to a friend: 'After all, if I try publishing, it's to please a few friends, nothing more. I don't want to see my work dead, that is to say published.' Reported in Luis Buñuel's *Mi último suspiro*.

⁵⁴ Cicero *De Orat.* 3.216. (Translation and reference from Thorsten Fögen, Classical Association Conference, Manchester 2001).

⁵⁵ Cicero *De Orat.* 2.269. (Translation from Rudd 1976, 152.)

⁵⁶ So poem i introduces a formally published selection and poem xiv speaks of a gift of a book of poems given by Calvus to Catullus. Poem xiv speaks of 'bookstalls', and xvi of Aurelius and Furius reading the poems. Poem xxxv addresses the papyrus itself and xlii demands back Catullus' notebook (*codicilli*). No poem explicitly refers to recitation, but it is argued that several were written with performance in mind. For example, Wiseman (1985, 127f) argues that Poem lxvi and lxiv were designed for theatrical performance, and Skinner (1993, 63) argues that for poem iv, the 'aural texture of the poem is...extraordinarily rich.'

⁵⁷ Wray (2001, 162).

⁵⁸ Wray (2001, 162).

⁵⁹ All vases discussed are illustrated in Green (1994).

⁶⁰ Berlin-Charlottenburg inv. 3223, c 470 BC.

⁶¹ Green (1994, 24).

⁶² This may be relevant to interpreting the scene, as it might relate to a particular stage version of a myth rather than directly to a standard version of a myth.

⁶³ Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (03.788 c. 480-470 BC).

⁶⁴ Green (1994, 43).

⁶⁵ Cf A Sicilian red-figure calx-krater from Syracuse (Syracuse 66557), c330 BC (Green 1994, 60f).

⁶⁶ Green (1994, 84): 'The mask means a character, a person with certain behaviour patterns.'

⁶⁷ A repeated image on marble reliefs was of comic poets seeking inspiration from their masks, reflecting that the masks represented the *dramatis personae*, the cast-list of a play. (Green 1994, 82 gives various references.)

⁶⁸ Native Atellan farce also included stock characters, such as the fool and the glutton.

⁶⁹ MacKendrick (1995, 264) has argued that Cicero adopted the stock figures of comedy in his defence of Caelius Rufus, and so provided entertainment on a par with the comedies being performed at the Megalensian Games running concurrently with the trial.

⁷⁰ For example, Braund (1996). I do have a problem with her view of 'Juvenal' as 'angry man' in the early satires and 'ironic detached satirist' in the later ones as this ignores the humour throughout the early satires that undercuts the 'ranting' voice. This includes: the irreverent mythical references (eg. I.54 *fabramque volantem* 'the flying carpenter', I.164: *Hylas urnamque secutus* 'Hylas following his urn'); the humorous visual pictures (eg I.63 the satirist furiously scribbling at the cross roads, I.124f the trick played by Galla's husband), and bathetic climaxes (eg III.8, poets reciting in the month of August).

⁷¹ This would explain the tendency to see allegory, for example in the character of Juvenal's Umbricius; Braund's comment (1996, 1) that autobiographical interpretation is a result of post-Romanticism ignores the fact that this was the approach that such as Horace would expect of his ancient readers. This is particularly the case in such satires as I.5, the apparently autobiographical journey to Brundisium (*Sat.* I.5).

⁷² Wray (2001, 162f).

⁷³ Braund (1996, 55).

⁷⁴ Ancient attitudes to bad luck, as shown in the parable of *The Good Samaritan* may be useful in explaining a positive audience response to the reaction of Horace and his friends to Nasidienus (*Sat.* II.8).

⁷⁵ Chaucer *General Prologue* 72.

⁷⁶ Brunt (1965b, 15): 'Cicero denies that his utterances as an advocate indicated his sentiments.'

⁷⁷ Brunt (1965b, 15) also comments: 'Cicero actually says that Antonius was careful not to publish his forensic speeches lest they be quoted against him; he did not wish them to be used as evidence of his real opinions.'

⁷⁸ Rudd (1964, 220f).

⁷⁹ Longinus *On the Sublime* 15 distinguishes between poetry which may go beyond the bounds of credibility and rhetoric which must restrain its bounds to what is 'practicable' (*eupakton*) and 'in accordance with truth' (*enalēthes*).

⁸⁰ Webb (1997, 117).

⁸¹ Webb (1997, 122).

⁸² Webb (1997, 123).

⁸³ See chapter 2 and 4 for discussion of rhetoric in the poems. Poem liii records an incident in court relating to Calvus' oratory.

⁸⁴ Poem lxxvi is an example where Catullus may be persuading himself as well as his wider audience. His various attacks on Caesar, Mamurra and Vatinius, eg xxix and lii are all designed to influence the opinion of their audience.

⁸⁵ Levene (1997, 131).

⁸⁶ Cf Skinner (1997, 132): 'In antiquity, expected audience response to a text was predicated on subjective identification with its narrative voice, presumed to be one with the voice of the author.'

⁸⁷ Modern texts, with the exception of the second marriage hymn, derive from one manuscript which, discovered at the end of the third century and published in 1472, already doubled the period of survival from Archilochus to Catullus. While we have so much of Catullus, there is virtually nothing extant from the other poets associated with him, or any of the letters of Cicero concerning Caelius which might have mentioned him or even any reaction to Catullus' poem about Cicero. So for example, we know nothing of the L Iulius Calidus whom Nepos (*Atticus* 12.4) mentions as the most elegant poet in the generation after Lucretius and Catullus.

⁸⁸ Wiseman (1979b, 161); also reaffirmed in Galinsky (Ed) (1992, 61).

⁸⁹ Tatum (1997, 489).

⁹⁰ Cf Quinn (1970, xv): 'Catullus' contemporaries seem to have taken it for granted that the poems reflected an actual affair.'

⁹¹ On the question of the reality of Furius and Aurelius, the main argument for their being real contemporaries is that, like Lesbia, they appear in a cycle of poems either together or separately, and often in some form of relation to Juventius. This sustained fiction is otherwise unparalleled. Further they are also mentioned in poems such as poem xi, with real people such as Julius Caesar and which also reflects real Roman expansionist ambitions. An additional point is that one would expect Catullus to have presented two fictional characters in a more coherent fashion; a very different relationship appears in poem 11.

⁹² Either kisses with Lesbia or Juventius could be referred to as both cycles of poems involve Furius and Aurelius and verbal similarities are inconclusive. Some have argued for the reality of Lesbia against the fiction of Juventius, dismissing homosexual relations as ‘fantasies of Greek symposiastic verse’ (Sullivan 1962, 194). In chapter 3 I address how homosexual and heterosexual are not terms that relate to Roman sexual habits and that it was perfectly acceptable for Roman citizen males to have a sexual relationship with other males so long as certain rules were followed. Similar codes of conduct applied to relationships with women, and the charge of effeminacy could therefore relate to both relationships as it refers to Catullus’ behaviour irrespective of the gender of his lover. The threats he makes are not to be taken as homosexual acts either, but the type of sexual behaviour socially acceptable, for example, by a cuckolded husband against an adulterer in reasserting his masculinity.

⁹³ Lateiner (1977, 15) translates *pious*, *castus* and *pudicus* as ‘reverent’, ‘sexually loyal’ and ‘modest’. The quality of being *castus* was related to *castitas*, which was what a man looked for in his wife not in his own behaviour – further topsy-turvidom. Richlin (1992b, 3) reads these words as more literally applying to the poet; she suggests that Catullus’ motive in making this disclaimer (as did Martial and Pliny) is that while it is not bad for the reader to read such poems, it is bad for the poet’s literary abilities to live such a life: ‘This theory claims not that reading obscene literature influences *mores* for the worse but that an obscene way of life influences literary style for the worse.’ This theory, however, does not appear to answer the questions posed here.

⁹⁴ Fitzgerald (1995, 50) argues that the sexual urges that Catullus is trying to incite are passive and inappropriate for mature Romans: ‘the hairy types are not flexible enough [being *duros*] for the undulations of the pathic.’ Hallett (1996, 328) disagrees that these men are pathic; ‘Catullus’ point...is clearly that his verses...are able to arouse erections (and the power to penetrate others).’ Either interpretation would still require these men to be ‘acted upon’ by the verses they choose to read, which render them not be in full control of their emotions, and so by definition, effeminate. There is no reason to identify Furius and Aurelius with these men as some have done (eg Nappa 2001, 55).

⁹⁵ Epstein (1987, 2).

⁹⁶ Skinner (1993, 65f) takes the accusation of femininity as a political attack to suggest that Romans in general lived up to this ideal, and that political invective castigated the exceptions. (p65: ‘Repressing one’s passions to such an extreme degree is obviously unnatural’). This leads her to see love poetry as an emotional release, not based on reality. While I have argued in the introduction for the importance of moral smears as political attack, I struggle with this notion of Catullus’ love poetry as emotional release for sexually repressed Roman men; Catullus’s desire to be exorcised from his passion for Lesbia is hardly erotic (cf. poems lxxii, lxxv, lxxvi, lxxxv).

⁹⁷ Wray (2001, 207).

⁹⁸ In relation to the claim of piety in poem 16, Wray points out (2001, 185f) that Archilochus’s invective was described as ravaging and raping, and comments (p186): ‘In writing those lines, Catullus may have had before his eyes, and expected his audience to see as well, the most conspicuous example known to antiquity of a holy poet who wrote dirty poems.’

⁹⁹ Hallett’s point (1996, 329) about the difference between Martial’s ‘phallic, sexually active’ verse and Catullus’ ‘passive, phallically arousing’ verse is relevant to Catullus’ approach to these two forms of masculinity; Catullus creates a situation which ‘does not locate either the poet-speaker or ideal intended reader in the passive, strictly receptive role.... Instead, such a role is reserved for inadequate, insufficiently appreciative readers like Furius and Aurelius.’

¹⁰⁰ I shall return to the issue of defining masculinity in chapter 3 and 4, especially in relation to his political attacks on Caesar.

¹⁰¹ Other examples are poem lxxv 17-24, where Catullus compares himself with Cydippe as an example of forgetfulness, where he could have used a male comparator, for example Theseus. In the same poem (10-14), he compares himself to the nightingale mourning her lost son Itys.

¹⁰² Richlin (1992b, 27) forgets poem xxviii when she argues: ‘the threat of irrumation – oral rape – represents both a strong staining and a strong degradation of the victim, and is the ultimate threat in invective, political or literary.’ The threat also has to be taken in the context of poem xi, where Furius and Aurelius are presented as friends.

¹⁰³ Horace *Sat.* II.1: ‘*si mala condiderit in quem quis carmina, ius est / iudiciumque.*’ ‘*Esto, si quis mala; sed bona si / quis iudice condiderit laudatus Caesare?*’

¹⁰⁴ Cf Horace *Sat.* I.6.

¹⁰⁵ Suetonius *Iul.* 49.4. I discuss this point further in chapter 4.

¹⁰⁶ Wray (2001, 175) points out that Critias 88 B 44 Diels Kranz remarked ‘that he spoke as abusively of his friends as he did of his enemies’ and that Aristides (*Or.* 46, 2.380.21) mentioned Pericles as one of Archilochus’s friends who was a target for invective.

¹⁰⁷ Their lack of literary appreciation does not necessary exclude them from Catullus' circle; Suffenus is charming, witty and urbane (xxii, 2: *venustas et dicax et urbanus*) in everything but his writing, and remains a good friend of Varus despite his awful poetry.

¹⁰⁸ Griffin (1985, 18-19).

¹⁰⁹ Rudd (1976, 174).

¹¹⁰ Adler (1981, 97). She comments further: 'This play with the nature of poetry is reflected in the nature of Catullus' own poem [poem xxxviii] which, besides being a poetic artefact, is meant to be both a personal communication and direct evidence of the poet's trouble.'

¹¹¹ It seems reasonable to assume that Catullus based his account on his experiences and observations on his journeys to and from Bithynia. To use poem iv as evidence for his route (eg Putnam 1962, 10f) is to ignore the clear indication of fictional content signalled by the use of the narrator.

¹¹² There is also an interesting question of 'autoallegory' in poem lxiii and lxiv. As Catullus makes it clear when he is using a narrator (eg poem iv), so it is clear when the poem is purely fictional: for example, in poem lxii, there are a mixture of Roman and Greek wedding customs and a deliberately vague geographical location. In lxiii and lxiv, it is not so clear cut: Harkins (1959, 106) has suggested that the first person address at the end of poem lxiii reflects his emotional involvement throughout the poem and Deroux (1986) has questioned whether Catullus' own bad experience in love accounts for the undercutting of the happy marriage of Peleus and Thetis by the tale of infidelity and filial betrayal blazoned across their couch.

¹¹³ Samuel Butler. *The Way of All Flesh* Ch 14.

¹¹⁴ Algernon Swinburne, letter to Edmund Gosse.

¹¹⁵ Newman (1967, 366).

¹¹⁶ Wiseman (in Galinsky (Ed) 1992, 64). Newman (1967, 366) agrees: 'The error committed by so many literary historians consists precisely of this, that they believe the second stage of the reaction, because it is more pondered than the first, is therefore less 'sincere': they cannot see that *unless the second stage takes place there is no literature at all.*'

¹¹⁷ Rudd (1976, 149). Cf Henry David Thoreau: 'Not that a story need be long, but it will take a long while to make it short.' Letter, 16 Nov 1867.

¹¹⁸ Segal (1968, 285): 'Yet, while intensity of emotion needs art to realize itself as expression and thus affect us meaningfully, the presence of art does not in all poets exclude the possibility of real emotion over real experiences.... It is precisely Catullus' extraordinary intensity of feeling which moves him to a corresponding intensity of form.'

¹¹⁹ Veyne (1988, 35).

¹²⁰ Newman (1967, 366).

¹²¹ Quinn (in Sullivan (Ed) 1962, 35).

¹²² Morrison, R. *BBC Music* (April 2004, 20).

¹²³ Morrison, R. *BBC Music* (April 2004, 20). He also gives the example of Handel fleshing out his organ concertos during thir first performances, and Beethoven relying on the same 'seat-of-pants' inspiration when he premiered his piano concertos.

¹²⁴ Philip Heseltine was born in 1894 at the Savoy Hotel, and died young, at the age of thirty-six, in 1930. There is some conjecture about the cause of death. He was satirised by DH Lawrence in *The Rainbow* and by Aldous Huxley in *Antic Hay*.

¹²⁵ Letter from Bruce Blunt to Gerald Cockshott. 1943. The original MS records the date as '29 vii 1930.'

¹²⁶ Cox/Bishop (Eds) (1994, 101). Constant Lambert considered Warlock's achievement within his self-imposed limits 'entitles him to be classed with Dowland, Schubert, Mussorgsky and Debussy as one of the greatest song-writers that music has known.' ('Master of English Song' *Radio Times*, 1st July 1938.)

¹²⁷ Quinn (in Sullivan (Ed) 1962, 35).

¹²⁸ In my own experience of teaching, I once had two pupils at Parkside Community College in Cambridge, who delighted in writing their English essays in rhyming couplets with great facility and without producing mere doggerel.

¹²⁹ Pliny (Ep 7.9.9-11): *Fas est et carmina remitti, non dico continuo et longo (id enim perfici nisi in otio non potest), sed hoc arguto et brevi, quod apte quantas libet occupations curasque distinguit. Lusus vocantur; sed hi lusus non minorem interdum gloriam quam seria consequuntur.* (Trans: Radice, Penguin 1969.)

¹³⁰ Wray (2001, 34).

¹³¹ Also in poem lxviii, 33-34, he comments that he cannot write a poem without his library of books with him.

¹³² Zetzel (in Galinsky (Ed) 1992, 51). Works alluded to include the opening lines of the *Odyssey* and a fragment of Parthenius (SH 626).

¹³³ Adler (1981, 6). Adler takes (p7) 'the speaking "I" as the voice of Catullus himself, a particular and knowable person who in fact wants to be known by us.'

¹³⁴ I cannot, however, agree with Adler where she sees the first person as self revelation and referring to the poet, while the third person refers to a constructed 'Catullus', the Catullus that is seen by his friends and lovers; ie the imperfect view of the real man. While this idea of an incomplete understanding of Catullus may be true of Lesbia and Juventius, and certain of his friends, it cannot be true of his close friends such as Calvus and Fabullus. Similarly, I cannot agree her extension of this view, that Catullus means us to understand that the 'Catullus' who is addressed in the third person is separate to the poet, identified with *I*. 'Catullus' of poem viii may need to be talked into resolution, but I cannot agree that the 'Catullus' of xlvii equally needs talking into resolution. There is a clear agreement of Catullus' *mens* and *pedes* that refutes Adler's argument that this is not a simple soliloquy.

¹³⁵ To argue for a humorous intent requires Catullus the poet to be a 'detached observer of the struggle between the speaker and lover' (Rowland (1966, 15-21), and thus to be using a *persona* 'Catullus' quite separate from the poet himself – which I have argued against above. Also as Dyson (1973,132) says: 'the mere fact that the speaker finishes up where he began, despite his suspect though emphatic proclamation of self-control, prompts no smile.'

¹³⁶ Greene (1998, 6).

¹³⁷ Dyson (1973,131).

¹³⁸ Commager (1965, 84).

¹³⁹ Cf Grimaldi (1965, 88): 'Catullan love poetry possesses the intense immediacy of an experience as well as (and this is frequently overlooked) the critical awareness which is able to stand apart from and to view the experience with discrimination and objectivity.'

¹⁴⁰ Grimaldi (1965, 93).

¹⁴¹ Cf the opposite case for Chaucer: 'His competence as a man of affairs is attested by a series of civil appointments.... Official records contain no reference to his literary work.' Winny, J (Ed) (1965) *The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* CUP.

Chapter Two

SETTING THE CONTEXT

*The past exudes legend; one can't make pure clay of time's mud. There is no life that can be recaptured wholly, as it was. Which is to say that all biography is ultimately fiction.*¹

‘Tout cela est absolument subjectif’ is the judgement of H Bardon on the subject of the facts of Catullus’ life.² With even Catullus’ *praenomen*³ in doubt, he had some grounds for this opinion. While I have argued that we must reject the romanticised fiction of the past ‘biographies’, we must also avoid throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Examining evidence in the poems and other ancient authors, I aim to explore two areas: firstly, what Catullus’ birth and death dates indicate as to the general historical context of the poems and more specifically within this timeframe, the possible dates and historical contexts for individual poems; secondly, I shall explore what can be ascertained about other aspects of his background, such as his service abroad, the social status of his parents, what is known about his friends and how his home province, Cisalpine Gaul, may have reflected on him.

SETTING THE CONTEXT: THE DATES OF CATULLUS’ LIFE AND POETRY

St Jerome, possibly working from Suetonius’ non-extant biography of Catullus, records his birth at Verona in 87 BC and his death as being in his thirtieth year, at Rome, in 57 BC.⁴

As has long been recognised, internal evidence in the poems, such as his reference to Pompey’s second consulship (Poem cxiii, 2), clearly show that Catullus was alive beyond 57 BC and St Jerome’s evidence has therefore either to be disregarded altogether or plausibly corrected. Dates are accordingly given as 76 and 46,⁵ 87 and 54,⁶ 84 and 54,⁷

among others. None of these suggestions is more than plausible and we have to take into account that tombstones themselves were not very accurate, often rounding up ages into multiples of five.

Further external evidence confirms that all these dates are within the right framework. Nepos speaks of him as being dead in 32 BC, supplying an extreme *terminus ante quem*, but suggesting an earlier date as he speaks of him as belonging to the previous generation of poets, along with Lucretius.⁸ Ovid speaks of him as youthful in Elysium with Calvus, who was born in 82 BC and dead by 47.⁹

How the Romans used such words as *iuvenis* and *senex*, and their derivatives is important here. So, for example, Aulus Gellius speaks of three stages of life; he uses *puer* up to seventeen years old, *junior* for up to forty-six, then *senior* for over 46.¹⁰ Varro has similar categories, but sub-divides the two later stages: *puer* up to fifteen; *adolescens* from fifteen to thirty, *iuvenis* from thirty to forty-five, *senior* from forty-five to sixty, and *senex* for sixty on.¹¹ Galen's four ages are a variation on this, without prescribing age limits.¹² Isidore agrees with Varro, setting the limit as 14 for a *puer*.¹³

What can be taken from all the variations is that the Roman word *iuvenis* does not mean 'young man' or 'youth' in the sense that we may use it of men from sixteen to about twenty-five. *Adolescens* is a better term for a man of this age group. Rather the term *iuvenis* may refer to a period of adult maturity, of a man in his late twenties and early to mid forties, leading up to the full flower of his career. For military purposes, it includes the period of *adulescentia*, referring to men of military age, that is from about seventeen to forty-six,¹⁴ while Varro's ages align with political age requirements. Under Sulla, Varro's contemporary, the minimum age for the quaestorship was thirty, the age at which *adulescentia* ended. A man then became *senior* from about the time when he might hope

to hold the consulship, in his mid forties.¹⁵ This is further emphasised by the fact that the root of the word *senex* and *senilis* is also found in the words *senator* and *senatus* and has no connotations of referring to men of retiring age. Given these definitions, it makes sense when Cicero calls himself a youth at the age of twenty-six, when he delivered the *Pro Roscio Amerino* in 80 BC, thereby acknowledging that at that time he had not yet embarked on a political career.¹⁶ Further he calls Calvus *adulescens* at his time of death, when he was still developing his oratorical skills, and in his early thirties.¹⁷ The use of the term *iuvenis* and the reference to the afterlife does not allow us, therefore, to narrow down the extremes of 87 and 46.

Of some interest is a comment by Tacitus, as on face value it seems to suggest by its reference to Augustus that Catullus was writing much later than generally assumed. He wrote: ‘The poems of Marcus Furius Bibaculus and Catullus – still read – are crammed with insults against the Caesars. Yet the divine Julius, the divine Augustus endured them and let them be.’¹⁸ Although contemporaries, Furius outlived Catullus by many years, and it is possible that Tacitus is referring to insults against Caesar by Catullus and against Augustus by Furius. Yet, as Martin and Woodman have pointed out, Furius probably wrote a mock-epic on the Gallic Wars, ‘but there seems no independent evidence that he attacked Octavian too.’¹⁹ A very tentative case can be made therefore that Catullus was writing into the early to mid forties, when Julius Caesar became the open champion of his young great-nephew, Octavian.²⁰

A passing comment by Martial might also lend some support to this hypothesis. In an epigram, Martial says that he has sent some verses to his friend, Silius Italicus: ‘Just so, perhaps, did Catullus send his ‘Passer’ to the great Virgil.’²¹ Virgil was born near Mantua, in Cisalpine Gaul, in October, 70 BC. He went to school in Cremona and Milan, and in 54,

went to Rome, aged fifteen. If the traditional death date of 54 is accepted, Catullus may well have been dead before Virgil even reached the city. For the compliment to ring true, there ought to have been some time before his death for Catullus to become at least in part acquainted with Virgil's own gifts. If he died in 47 or 46, Virgil would have been twenty-three or twenty-four, and no doubt already showing the talents that made the pastoral poems so popular on their release in 37 BC.

It may be argued that Martial (AD 40-104) was not concerned with historical accuracy in this remark. He was, however, intimately acquainted with Catullus' work, openly acknowledging his debt to the earlier poet. Furthermore, Silius Italicus was a great and pedantic admirer of Virgil, well known for celebrating his birthday and owning his tomb; such a chronological error would surely have been noted by such a man, spoiling the effect of the compliment.

External evidence, therefore, gives broad agreement to the overall framework of 87 to 46, with Catullus being no more than a 'young man' of forty-one at death, but without pin-pointing either his birth or death more accurately. I turn now to the poems.

As mentioned above, in several of the poems, Catullus makes references to events which can be dated, proving that he lived until 55 BC and possibly later; he refers to Pompey's second consulship of 55 BC (cxiii 2), and his Portico (lv 6: *Magni... ambulatione*) completed that year, and dedicated in 52. The mention of the invasion of Britain in poems xi and xxix provides dates or rather *termini post quem* for these poems; August 55 at the very earliest, and they may date to 54 when Caesar invaded on a much larger scale or even later as a third invasion was probably talked about. For poem xxix, the mention of Pompey as Caesar's son-in-law gives an additional *terminus ante quem* of 52 as Pompey remarried in that year, following Julia's death in 54, finally breaking his

connection through marriage with Caesar. The accusation in this poem that Mamurra was squandering the wealth of the new territories of Gaul and Britain suggests that the winter of 55/54 is a likely date as the hope of profit from the invasion of Britain soon proved illusory.

The dating of these two poems is particularly significant as they appear to portray very different attitudes to Julius Caesar, and I shall deal further with this and their wider political significance in chapter 4. Poem xi is also often interpreted as representing the final phase in Catullus' love affair with Lesbia as it is portrayed in the poems, dating their break-up to 54. There are two problems with this date; firstly, as argued above we can only give a *terminus post quem* for poem xi. Secondly, the poem may not portray an end point in the affair at all, but rather a bad episode from which there was partial recovery; it seems reasonable to suggest that where we have poems showing a range of attitude to his love for Lesbia from disillusionment to the time when his love for Lesbia had become utterly foul to him, worthy only of cauterisation, that the poems of disillusion come before those of hatred.²² If so, the very striking flower image at the end of the poem which shows an aesthetic delicacy in his appreciation of his love would belong to a time of disillusion rather than disgust. This would put poems such as lxxvi later than poem xi, and possibly into 53 or 52 BC.

Britain is also mentioned in Poem 45, this time coupled with Syria. Catullus says that Septimius prefers Acme to all the Syrias and Britains. In 55, both these campaigns would have been open to ambitious young men, as Caesar was planning his first invasion of Britain and Crassus his ill-fated campaign to the East.²³ The following year is also possible, though less probable, as although Caesar launched the second even greater attack,

Crassus had already left for the East in the November of his year of office (55). The date, 53, cannot be totally discounted, at least up to the date of Crassus' death at Carrhae.

Catullus also refers to the historical figure P Vatinius and events concerning him in poems lii and liii, which we may tentatively date. Taking these in reverse order, poem liii deals with an attack in court on Vatinius by Catullus' great friend, Calvus, and Vatinius' exclamation (liii 5: *Di Magni, salaputium disertum*. 'Great Gods, the squirt's articulate!' Trans. Lee 1991). There is a notable verbal similarity with Seneca's account of a similar attack in court on Vatinius by an unnamed prosecutor; he records how Vatinius is alleged to have jumped up and exclaimed: *rogo vos iudices: num si iste disertus est, ideo me damnari oportet?* ('I ask you, judges: is it right that I am found guilty because he is articulate?')²⁴ From Tacitus, it is known that Calvus attacked Vatinius in court at least three times,²⁵ and we can tentatively date those attacks; in 58, Vatinius was standing for the aedileship, but was threatened with prosecution under the supervision of the praetor, C Memmius. If Catullus and Seneca are speaking of the same event, this is not the right occasion as there was no real threat of prosecution as Clodius broke up the court. In March 56, Vatinius was a witness against Sestius, who was defended by both Cicero and Calvus. Catullus, however, would have been many miles away in Bithynia at this time, not on the spot to write such a topical poem and as a witness, Vatinius was in no danger of being found guilty. This leaves the trial of 54, where Vatinius was defended by the unwilling Cicero as the likely date for Seneca's anecdote and poem liii.

Returning to poem lii, this mentions Vatinius' consulship which took place in 47 BC, giving a precise date for this poem – or so it first appears. Believing that there were no curule officers in 47 as none are recorded, Mommsen had to explain the reference to a Nonius *in curuli*.²⁶ His answer was that the year was wrong, and so he suggested that

Vatinius was swearing not by his actual consulship, but by his confident assumption that he would attain the position; the real date of the poem being sometime in the previous decade, after Luca.²⁷ Historians have long considered Mommsen to be wrong regarding the curule officers, as Barrett has pointed out, and his argument about Vatinius is therefore unnecessary. Given this and the fact that the poem does say that he was swearing *per consulatum*, ('by his consulship') not *per spem consulatus* or *per consulatum speratum*, ('by the hope of his consulship'), the burden of proof should be with those arguing against the obvious date.

The argument has some plausibility. It is well documented that Vatinius was arrogantly assuming that he would achieve the consulship: Cicero says that he had been doing so since his quaestorship in 63.²⁸ It is likely that such a keen supporter of Caesar and Pompey would have been rewarded by having his name included in the list of future consuls (*paginulae futurorum consulum*), that they were rumoured to have drawn up at the conference at Luca in 56 and his success in the elections for the praetorship of 55 would have been a clear step in the right direction. Whether contemporary Romans, however, such as Catullus saw his election as a foregone conclusion is a different matter. Cicero's *Interrogatio In Vatinius* of 56 BC was hardly positive publicity and Corbeill explains his freedom to attack Vatinius as being 'on account of the popular hatred of his subject, a hatred later attested by Seneca and Velleius.'²⁹ Furthermore, as Epstein has argued: 'The unsavoury tactics used by Vatinius during this campaign [for the praetorship of 55] were to provide potential prosecutors all the ammunition they needed to attack him through the courts after this office expired.'³⁰ One of these prosecutors was probably Catullus' best friend Calvus. Caesar and Pompey's list was by no means foolproof either; I deal with their difficulties in securing the elections of their preferred candidates in chapter 4.

Furthermore, whatever Vatinius' thoughts on the subject, it actually took him sixteen years after his quaestorship to achieve the rank of consul.

The year 47 was a very different situation for Rome and for Catullus personally. Vatinius' election to the consulship came at a climax of chaos and turbulence; Pompey had been defeated in civil war, the constitution had broken down into bloody havoc,³¹ and Caesar on his return to Rome, organised an election that gave the consulship to his unpopular henchman, Vatinius, and a curule office to a nobody. For Catullus, mindful of his dead friend Calvus's hatred of Vatinius, it must have been a bitter pill to swallow to see this corrupt figure swearing to uphold the law. In these depressing circumstances, it is not so surprising that Catullus should say in poem lii, *quid moraris emori?* ('why defer decease?')

Dating the poem to 47 BC has an impact on its message and tone, and I shall discuss this in chapter 4. In more general terms, it means that Catullus lived through some major political events, some affecting him personally, such as the murder of Clodius in 52, the growing anarchy at Rome during Caesar's absence from 58 to 49 BC, and crossing of the Rubicon in 49. At the same time, Caesar was very much present in Catullus' home province, Cisalpine Gaul, spending virtually every winter there and giving it full citizenship rights in 49. Following Pompey's death in 48, Catullus would have witnessed the beginning of Caesar's dictatorship in 47. If he was born in 77BC, he would have been thirty this year.

Some scholars have argued that Catullus cannot have lived so much longer as there are no poems dated after 54. With only about fifteen percent of the poems being datable, this is not a secure argument; as Maas pointed out there are no poems datable to before 56, but it is not argued that he did not write anything before this date.³² Many of the poems

can only be given a *terminus post quem*, not an exact date, and it is only the preconceived idea that Catullus died in 54 that attributes several of them to that year. Remove such preconceptions, and later dates may be seen to suit several poems: Barrett tentatively offers the date 50 BC for Poem xlv, as in that year, Cicero refers to the poor reputation of Publius Sestius as a writer.³³ He also suggests that Poem xciii would suit a later date as it would have had special significance if it came after Caesar's defeat of the Pompeians in 48, when all eyes were turned on him. Poem xi has already been discussed above as perhaps not signifying the end of the affair, and thus suggesting a later date for the more bitter poems. While Catullus was friends with Furius and Aurelius when he wrote this poem, his relationship with them seems to have soured significantly when he wrote poem xvi. A simple solution would be that Catullus had no dispute with them in about 54, but that this came later with his affair with Juventius in the late 50s or early 40s.

These dates are suppositions only, but there is a much stronger case for dating one of Catullus' most remarkable poems to the forties, poem lxiv. Rowland argued that the Battle of Pharsalus (9th August, 48) had a major impact on this poem and that considering the poem in this battle-ground context helps explain some of the many paradoxes of the poem.³⁴ So, for example, this context provides a reason for the change in location from the traditional Mt Pelion to the otherwise little known Pharsalus. It explains the hyperbole of Catullus' descriptions of nearby towns, including *moenia Larisaea*, as abandoned, and the land left neglected and uncultivated (*rura colit nemo...* vv 38-42). These descriptions reflect major and intensive turmoil rather than the temporary and superficial disruption caused by the day's holiday for the wedding. While the battle of Pharsalus in the Roman calendar took place on the 9th August, this could in real time have been more like mid-May, a far busier time in the farmers' year.³⁵ Rowland also points out that the word used to

describe the guests gathering, *coeunt*, has two further meanings, one erotic, the other ‘to clash in war.’³⁶ A civil war context would also help explain the motifs of brutality, discord, strife and tragedy that Curran has shown are all associated with the wedding of Peleus and Thetis.³⁷

The references so far mentioned are incidental to the poems and not part of any poetic fiction. An event that Catullus refers to in several poems which would be useful to date is his trip to Bithynia with his friend Cinna and in the cohort of Memmius.³⁸ While there is no external evidence to support the fact that Catullus did in fact make this journey, there is a cycle of poems referring to it both directly and in passing, including incidental details such as the name of the governor, his companion and a chief export which strongly suggest that these biographical details were intended to be taken as true by his audience. The incidental details also allow a date to be given to a real expedition whether we believe Catullus attended or not. We know that C Memmius was praetor in 58³⁹ and was designated governor of Bithynia and Pontus, where he presumably went in 57 until the praetor of 57, C Caecilius Cornutus, took over in 56.⁴⁰ His term was probably from spring – the start of the sailing season – of 57 to spring 56. While Catullus talks of being in Bithynia with Cinna, his friends Veranius and Fabullus were also away with a governor called Piso.⁴¹ There are also several references to Veranius and Fabullus being in Spain, including mention of Saetaban napkins that were given as a gift to Catullus,⁴² and which he mentions alongside some Bithynian face-towels in poem xxv.⁴³

The governor of Spain for 57/6 is not known, although Cicero says that the governor of Macedonia was L Piso Caesoninus,⁴⁴ providing a Piso and a Memmius as governors in the same year, but not both in the right place. It has long been argued that Catullus refers to two trips made by his friends, one to Spain under an unnamed governor, a trip that was

rather more financially successful judging by the presents they were able to bring home, and a second less successful trip under L Piso Caesoninus, who returned in the late summer of 55. Cicero's description of Piso's treatment of his *cohors* in Macedonia tallies well with Catullus' description in Poem xviii, although this may have as much to do with convention as reality.

If we accept a theory of two trips, we need to consider the evidence for the order in which they occurred. There is one piece of evidence which seems to suggest that the Spanish trip should be dated to before 59 BC, and so prior to Catullus' trip to Bithynia. In poem xii, which refers to the Spanish napkins, Catullus also mentions Pollio, and describes him as 'a boy full of wit and charm' (xii 9: *leporum / differtus puer ac facetiarum*). As discussed earlier in this chapter, the word *puer* would normally refer to a boy up to the age of seventeen, when he assumed the *toga virilis* and would be referred to as *iuvenis* or *vir*.⁴⁵ While it is possible that Ovid might have used the word *puer* to mean 'bachelor', other evidence shows that normally there was a clear distinction. As Wiedermann stated: 'The dividing line between child and adult is as sharp as the conventions of the classical city state require. It was symbolised by the ceremonial donning of the white toga, the *toga pura* or *toga virilis*.'⁴⁶ Furthermore, Dickey points out that, 'Towards the upper end of the acceptable age limit for address with *puer*, the term may have been somewhat insulting. Cicero quotes a letter from Antony to Octavian in which the future emperor is addressed as *o puer, qui omnia nomini debes* 'O boy, you who owe everything to your name.'⁴⁷ Any other sense of the word also misses the point of the poem; it is Pollio's youthful good sense in comparison with his brother's adult bad judgement that is being emphasised. As Pollio was born in 76, Catullus' term of address would suggest an early date for this poem – 59 at

the very latest. This argument would also rule out the possibility that the Spanish trip of Veranius and Fabullus took place in 57/6 with a Piso otherwise unattested.

When considered in the light of two trips, the mood of Poem ix also seems to fit a theory that Catullus was left behind on this occasion. He expresses great but unfocused relief at Veranius's return, and there is no mention of bad treatment as in Poem xxviii. There is also none of the feeling of camaraderie of that poem, where Catullus stresses their similar positions. One might also have expected the recounting of exploits and experiences to have been a joint expectation, but Catullus does not mention his own adventures at all. Catullus also speaks of the napkins being sent to him, suggesting that he was at home (Rome or Cisalpine Gaul) at the time.

With the date of the trip to Bithynia reasonably secure, poems relating to this experience can be considered. Some of the poems may have been written while in Bithynia, for example poem xxviii, in which he send commiserations to his friends, Veranius and Fabullus. We know that Memmius started back for Rome in the spring of the following year, but Catullus appears in poem xlvi to have chosen to travel back independently, making the most of the opportunities for sight-seeing. This would suggest that Poem xxxi, in which he describes his homecoming, was written not much earlier than mid to late 56. As he says he returned to Sirmio not to Rome, poems written in Rome that refer to his time away should be dated to after mid 56. Poem x, in which Varus' girlfriend quizzes him on the souvenirs he has brought back with him, could quite conceivably be dated to late 56 at the earliest, irrespective of whether it refers to a real event. Poems referring to the Spanish trip can also be tentatively dated: Poem xii to 59 at the latest, and Poem ix describing Veranius' return from Spain, to a little before.

Returning in the spring of 56 would mean that Catullus was not in Rome for the trial of Caelius Rufus held on 3rd and 4th April and would have missed witnessing the vilification by Cicero of Clodia Metelli. In fact, Catullus probably missed the trial by much more than the date suggests; as mentioned above, by 46 BC the Roman year had become ninety days ahead of the seasons and was no doubt out by some considerable time in 56, ten years before. This trial may therefore in real time have taken place mid to late February, four or five months before Catullus' return to Rome. Had the calendar been behind the seasons instead of ahead a very different light may have been shed on poem lviii (*Caeli, Lesbia nostra, Lesbia illa*).

Wiseman has also argued that the obscure towns mentioned in poem xxxvi could make more sense if viewed in the context of a sea voyage from Greece to the north end of the Adriatic.⁴⁸ He points out that the description of Dyracchium as the 'tavern of the sea of Hadria' reflects the fact that it is one place where travellers by sea stopped *en route* into the Adriatic. This would mean that this poem, representing a lively phase in the love affair, would date to after Catullus' trip to Bithynia. Sandy in his review, however, argues that the names given do not necessarily refer to places on the coast or to useful harbours for travellers, and therefore disputes their relationship to Catullus' own sea voyage.⁴⁹

The journey to Bithynia also shows a possible development in Catullus' use of the spondaic opening to hendecasyllables. It appears that Catullus loosened his metrical rule of always using a spondee during the mid 50s.⁵⁰ Poems xlvi (Catullus sets out from Bithynia), ix (Veranius arrives home), xii (Saetaban napkins), and xxviii (stingy governors) are all early poems, dating to no later than 56 BC, with no trochaic or iambic opening feet. On the other hand, poem xlv (Septimius and Acme), probably dating to 55 at the earliest, has eight. Catullus' affair with Lesbia also seems to fit the pattern, if we assume a

progression from a happy beginning to concern and breakdown in the relationship.

Accordingly, the positive poems v (living and loving), xiii (his girlfriend's perfume), and xliii (Lesbia compared to Aemeana) all have spondaic openings, while poem vii (how many kisses?), poem xxxvi (redeeming the vow with Volusius' *Annals*), poem xl (Ravidus, a rival) and poem lviii (Our Lesbia, Caelius) show the metrical development. There are dangers here, however; the progression of the love affair is only assumed and cannot be used to prove the dating of metrical development. The order of the poems in the collection as we have them is also no guarantee of comparative date; just because the poems on the sparrow (ii and iii) come early in the collection is no proof that they were written in the early days of the relationship. The occurrence of non-spondaic openings in these two poems cannot therefore date the start of the Lesbia affair to after 56 as Wiseman argues.⁵¹ Furthermore, this dating of the affair is contradicted by the same metrical evidence; poems v, xiii, and xliii are all fully spondaic which should put the start of the affair before 56, not after. The short timescale in which the metrical development occurred also complicates matters; as mentioned above, one kiss poem (v) is spondaic, the second (vii), not strictly so. While appearing promising, there is little therefore that one can securely say based on this metrical difference.

From this discussion, it can be seen that Catullus' poems provide some tantalising clues, but as often with Catullus little is beyond all doubt. Nevertheless, the aim of this first section has been to challenge the traditional view that Catullus wrote only in the early to mid fifties, dying in 54 BC. The results are tabulated below, with the corresponding age of Catullus depending on which birth date is accepted (see table 1). It can be seen that, contrary to expectation perhaps, there is evidence for the alternative view that Catullus

lived through the fifties, into the forties. This then will be the historical, social and political context in which Catullus’ poems will be considered.

Table 1: Dating the Poems

Poem	Reference	Date	Catullus’ age if born in		
			87	84	76
iv	Trip back from Bithynia?	?56→	31→	28→	20→
ix 7	Veranius’ return from Spain (see poem xii)	→59	→29	→25	→17
x 7	Return to Rome, after Bithynia (after Sirmio)	Late 56→	31/2	28/9	20/1
xi 12	Britain	August 55→	32→	29→	21→
xii 14	Spanish napkins, Pollio as <i>puer</i>	→59	→29	→25	→17
xxv 7	Spanish napkins, Bithynian face-towels	56→	31→	28→	20→
xxviii 1	Piso as Governor, Catullus in Bithynia	56/55	31/2	28/9	20/1
xxix 20	Britain’s spoils; Julia’s death	August 55→52	29→32	26→29	18→21
xxxi 5f	Return to Sirmio from Bithynia	mid-late 56	31	28	20
xxxv 5	Novum Comum	59→	29→	25→	17→
xlvi 22	Britain and Syria	55→53	32-4	29-31	21-3
xlvi 4	Return from Bithynia	Spring 56	31	28	20
lii 3	Vatinius Consul	47	40	37	29
liii 2	Attack on Vatinius by Calvus	54 (or 58, 56)	33 (29, 31)	30 (26, 28)	22 (18, 20)
lv 6	Pompey’s Portico	55→; 52→	32→; 35→	29→; 32→	21→; 24→
lxiv 37	Battle of Pharsalus	Aug 48→	39→	36→	28→
lxxxiv 7	Syria	?55	32	29	21
ci	Brother’s tomb (trip back from Bithynia?)	?56→	31→	28→	20→
cxiii 2	Pompey’s 2 nd consulship	55	32	29	21

SETTING THE CONTEXT: FAMILY, FRIENDS AND CISALPINE GAUL

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND CITIZENSHIP

According to the passage of St Jerome quoted above, Catullus came from Verona in Cisalpine Gaul and Catullus’ poems include references to being in Verona (for example, poem lxviii 27). He is also portrayed as being resident in the area around Verona, in

Sirmio. As a man from a provincial town (*municipalis*), but very much resident in Rome, Catullus could claim two ‘native cities’ (*patriae*), Rome and his hometown.⁵²

Accordingly, he describes Rome as his *domus* where he lives, although Sirmio remained his *lar*.⁵³

Catullus was a Roman citizen as poem lxviii makes clear, describing his donning the toga at his coming-of-age ceremony, just like any other Roman. How his family became citizens is unknown. Verona had some form of colony status as Catullus refers to it as such (xvii 1: *colonia*), although much of the surrounding area would only have held Latin rights until 49BC.⁵⁴ His family could have been Roman, simply holding their main estates in Transpadane Gaul, with other holdings on the Sabine side of the Tiber (Poem xlv). Alternatively, his ancestors could have been part of colonies set up there, either retaining their full Roman citizenship or with Latin rights, in which case they could have regained citizenship through holding a local magistracy (*per magistratum*). A fourth possibility is that his family was of Gallic or Etruscan origin, recently enfranchised through holding a local magistracy under the Latin rights granted after the end of the Social War.

What is very clear about Catullus’ family background, was its very high status in the province. Suetonius informs us that Catullus’ family were on familiar terms with Julius Caesar:

‘Valerius Catullus had also libelled him in his verses about Mamurra, yet Caesar while admitting that these were a permanent blot on his name, accepted Catullus’ apology, and invited him to dinner that same afternoon, and never interrupted his friendship with Catullus’ father.’ (Suet *Iul* lxxiii)

Suetonius does not actually say that Caesar visited Catullus’ father in Cisalpine Gaul, but this is most likely as the poems referred to dated to the mid fifties when Caesar was absent from Rome, but spending most winters in Cisalpine Gaul.⁵⁵ An insignificant, low-born

Italian family without wealth would never have been on such regular social terms with a proconsular Roman.

Archaeological evidence is also helpful here as the villa at Sirmio on Lake Garda which Catullus mentions in Poem xxxi has almost definitely been discovered, although the remains on view today are of a later, much finer building. This later building is arguably the finest villa site in northern Italy,⁵⁶ and the original U-plan villa of the first century BC which may have belonged to Catullus would have had all the advantages of the outstanding setting. The prosperity of the site suits what we know of the up-and-coming nature of Catullus' family; in the early empire, Valerii Catulli were *principes* in nearby Brixia, holding senatorial rank in the time of Augustus,⁵⁷ which by then required a property qualification of at least one million sesterces.⁵⁸ The family achieved the consulship during the reign of Gaius.⁵⁹ It is likely that some at least of the family money came from the exploitation of the empire as *negotiatores* and *publicani*; it is known that in the thirties BC, just a generation after Catullus, the family was involved in the large-scale export of pickled fish from Baetica in South Spain.⁶⁰

As mentioned above, Catullus also possessed farmland, either near Tibur, in Latium, or in the Sabine district (xliv 1: *O Funde noster seu Sabine seu Tiburs*), including a house which Catullus describes as *suburbana* ('near Rome'). If this property was indeed Tiburtan, this is of some significance as Tibur was not only close to Rome, but also a highly fashionable country resort. Catullus' point is that the *ager Sabinus* had no such aristocratic connotations, but even if his property was only on the border of the fashionable area, it was still a symbol of prosperity and wealth. Nor do we need to take the Sabine jibe too seriously; Catullus disparages his wealth in poem xiii, where he invites Fabullus to dinner, but asks him to supply all the effects except the perfume which Catullus would

provide. Far from backing up Catullus' claim to have a purse full of cobwebs, he is in fact providing one of the most costly items: as Edwards comments 'Expensive, rare and evanescent, too, were the wines, perfumes and flowers which were also characteristic features of the voluptuary's *convivium* (evening party).'⁶¹ This Tiburtan/Sabine connection also makes the point that the family was not as provincial as a Gallic background might suggest; and that it is wrong to think in terms of a socially inferior 'municipal poet' on the periphery of life at Rome. As Brunt has pointed out: 'Senators, Equites and the municipal oligarchs formed a single class,' and Catullus was very much a part of that class.⁶²

There can be little doubt therefore that Catullus would have been wealthy enough to belong to the *prima classis*, if not the equestrian order (*ordo equester*) at Rome. The financial qualification for the latter was four hundred *sestertia* by the late Republic. This was, of course, only the basic financial qualification; life at Rome in any style would require an income deriving from a fortune far greater than this.⁶³ Whether Catullus merely held the equestrian *census*, was officially of equestrian status, or held the rank of equestrian with the public horse (*equus equo publico*) is unclear, especially as we do not completely understand how one qualified for membership of the order or privileged sectors within it, if indeed such distinctions existed. We do not know, therefore, whether he had the right to wear a gold ring and to sit in the reserved seats at the theatre alongside other equestrians.⁶⁴ Status as an *equus* did not necessarily reflect non-political ambitions. All senators' sons were automatically *equites equo publico* before entering the senate themselves, and most notably, although exceptionally, Pompey was of equestrian rank when he received his extraordinary commands, and was elected straight from that rank to the consulship.

Wealth was obviously a key factor in the status of all Romans, provincial or otherwise. Education was another. We do not know whether Catullus was educated at

Rome or in Cisalpine Gaul, but it is clear from his poems that his education in rhetoric was highly proficient.⁶⁵ He makes confident use of the features of the grand style of oratory such as *enargeia* (vividness), rhetorical questions, hyperbatory (inversion of word order), hyperbole (exaggeration), anaphora (repetition) and apostrophe (address), as well as other qualities such as humour, invective and *sententia* (pithy catch-lines). Poems such as lli (*quid est, Catulle?*) which I discuss in chapter 4, and lviii (Caeli, Lesbia nostra...) are highly rhetorical. In the latter, there is anaphora (Lesbia repeated three times in just two lines), chiasmic patterns (*Lesbia illa,/ illa Lesbia*), oxymoron (*magnanimi Remi*), shock tactics (the unexpected word *glubit*) and varied use of sound effects (euphonic ‘ae’, ‘a’ and ‘o’ sounds in the first section are followed by ugly ‘i’ sounds with harsh plosive and fricative consonants in such words as *quadriuiis* and *angiportis* in the last lines). The difficult ending of poem li, whereby Catullus considers the advantages and disadvantages of *otium* compared to duty, may also be explained as a declamatory twist. Another rhetorical device is introducing a fictitious adversary or interlocutor; a notable example is in the two-line poem lxxxv where Catullus poses and responds to the question of his ‘reader’ (lxxxv 1: *quare id faciam fortasse requiris?* ‘Why do I do this perhaps you ask?’). Catullus was also very much connected with the key practitioners and developers of Roman eloquence; Calvus and Hortensius were considered highly influential practitioners by their contemporary Cicero.⁶⁶

All evidence, therefore, points to a background of security and financial affluence in a local élite, capable of supporting Catullus in the heart of sophisticated society at Rome and of launching and supporting a Valerius in a senatorial career just a generation later. That Catullus had aspirations beyond this local gentry is clear from his making Rome his home. Whether these aspirations were literary, political or merely social, shall be

considered further in the light of what is known of his immediate family, the possible influences of his birthplace, and his known activities.

Turning to his immediate family, very little is known about Catullus' father or his relationship with Catullus, although Suetonius' comment, quoted above, suggests he was alive at least until 55 BC as Julius Caesar took the trouble to maintain his relationship with him, despite Catullus' poems about Mamurra. Whether he retained nominal control over Catullus as the *paterfamilias* is unclear; in poem xxxi, dated to around 56 BC, Catullus' speaks of himself as master (*erus*) of Sirmio, but this is inconclusive. Catullus clearly had sufficient funds to set up a residence in Rome, although the example of Caelius Rufus shows that this does not prove his independence.⁶⁷ The anti-Caesar poetry might have caused problems between them, despite Caesar's magnanimity. It has been argued that the way Catullus speaks of old age could also give a hint at his attitude to his father; Young points out that five occurrences of the adjective *tremulus* are connected with ideas of old age and parenthood (xvii 12f; lxi 51; lxi 154f; lxiv 307f; lxviii 142f), associating older people with instability, helplessness, and burden.⁶⁸ This usage may owe more to the language of comedy than reality, however, and such fragility does not seem appropriate for a friend of Caesar.

What is more useful to note is the lack of filial responsibility (*pietas*) Catullus shows when he describes his love for Lesbia as being paramount to all other feelings: for example, in poem lviii, 2-3, he says that Lesbia was loved more than his own kin (*suos omnes*).⁶⁹ Not only has Catullus transferred his allegiance from his own family (*domus*) to Lesbia, but in pursuing an affair with a married woman, shows no concern about producing an heir. When Catullus' brother dies, therefore, it could indeed have been a disaster for the *domus* (lxviii 94: *tecum una tota est nostra sepulta domus*). How Catullus' father reacted to this

relationship is unknown, but he could have been one of the *senum severiorum* condemning Catullus (v 2) for his nocturnal escapades and his deficient sense of duty to his *domus*.

Of Catullus' beloved brother, nothing is known beyond his grave being near Troy and that he possibly died by drowning (lxv 7f). We do not know his name, where he lived, or when he died. Without knowing if he was the elder brother, we cannot tell how his death may have affected Catullus' ambitions and expectations. Accordingly, it is difficult to piece together his relationship with Catullus, especially as he is only mentioned in the poems once dead. Catullus' professions of love appear strong, and at times, similar to the terms he uses for Lesbia, for example, 'more lovable than life' (lxv 10: *vita...amabilior*). Such language calls into question whether Catullus was actually referring to a brother at all; the term 'brother' (*frater*) as Dickey has pointed out, was used by Cicero and later authors to denote friendship or even mere politeness.⁷⁰ Furthermore, it could have a sexual meaning, whereby *frater* and *soror* are used as romantic addresses; Petronius used *frater* for homosexual lovers of equal rank and Martial plays on the meaning in poem ii 4 where he says that Ammianus's mother acts as his 'sister' and Ammianus as her 'brother'.⁷¹ The household (*domus*) Catullus refers to in poem lxviii could then be simply his residence in Rome from which all pleasures have been banished since the person whose sweet love nourished those joys has died (lxviii 23f: *gaudia nostra / quae tuus...dulcis alebat amor*).

The evidence seems fairly balanced either way; on the one hand, one might expect friends such as Hortalus and Manlius to be aware of a death of a close family member and to respect a time of mourning, yet Manlius at least appears ignorant of Catullus' loss (lxviii 11: *sed tibi ne mea sint ignota incommoda, Manli*). On the other hand, such friends might also be expected to be aware of the fate of a boyfriend. In poem lxv, Catullus compares himself to a mother, the Daulian princess, mourning her dead son Itylus. This

simile could be argued both ways as it fits neither case precisely. He ends the poem with a simile about a girl revealing a secret gift from her fiancé, returning to the theme of sexual love at the poem's close. Wray has pointed out that in poem ci, ostensibly set at his brother's grave, Catullus echoes the proem of *The Odyssey* which describes how Odysseus was distressed by his failure to prevent the deaths of his comrades; love of a friend rather than a brother may be suggested by this verbal allusion.⁷² In poem lxviii, he connects his brother with past love affairs, explaining how he had indulged a good deal (lxviii 17 *multa satis lusi*) since coming of age, but now had no taste for love due to his brother's death. He does not care who is sleeping with whom in Rome, while he remains in Verona; that is the effect of the death of his *frater*. Such a link between his 'brother' and his sex life suggests 'boyfriend' rather than 'brother,' although affectionate love can be expressed by Catullus in sexual terms as we know from his poems about making poetry with Calvus (poem l).

In poem lxviii, he compares the loss the city of Troy has caused him with that of Laodamia robbed of her husband whom she loved passionately, but then continues to compare her passion to that of Lesbia, his girlfriend.⁷³ And despite having said at line 95 that all joy is ended with his brother's death, by the end of the poem, Lesbia is the one who is dearest of all, and able to make Catullus' life sweet. There is also the question of the repeated section from lxviii; there are contradictions here which are impossible to unravel with any certainty, except to say that Catullus' avowals of love for his 'brother' in this poem are not quite as straightforward as they first appear. A final point is that at no time does Catullus name his brother as might be expected in eulogistic verse, although conversely, Catullus is not shy at naming his lovers; the translation of *frater* as 'boyfriend' cannot be ruled out as a possibility.⁷⁴

His immediate family does not therefore add much to our picture of a young well-born Roman. There is one question, however, that needs to be answered: if Catullus' father was on such good terms with Caesar, and Caesar was particularly welcoming to potential army officers from municipal aristocracies, why did Catullus choose to abuse Caesar so violently?⁷⁵ Surely if Catullus wished to pursue a political career, he should have made use of such a valuable contact? As Wiseman comments in his discussion on factors influencing the success of new men, 'Contact and familiarity with influential Roman politicians, whether as clients, as neighbours and social intimates, or as relatives by marriage and adoptions, was indubitably the most important single factor among all the circumstances which might help or hinder a municipal aristocrat who aspired to the Senate.'⁷⁶

While Catullus' relationship with Caesar will be examined in much greater depth in chapter 4, one point may be made immediately. To cultivate friendship with Caesar, an obvious way was to join him on his campaigns, but this path held significant risks as Caesar himself reveals when he records the effect the Germans had on his companions' enthusiasm to stay with him: 'It began with the military tribunes, the prefects of the auxiliary troops, and the men with little experience of war who had followed Caesar from Rome in order to cultivate his friendship. Most of these alleged some urgent reason or other for leaving camp.'⁷⁷ Reading the Gallic Wars, one is repeatedly struck by the sheer danger of the campaigns; several times, Caesar's own life was seriously in threat.⁷⁸ It would be understandable if Catullus had no wish to undertake such a lifestyle, and for someone with any literary ambitions, Rome was far more inviting than the campaigning field, especially as military service was no longer the essential aspect of a political career it had once been.

THE INFLUENCE OF GALLIA CISALPINA

Cisalpine Gaul was well populated and prosperous, and during Catullus' lifetime could boast walled main centres with public buildings.⁷⁹ Although a province, its main centres had been regularised as *coloniae* since the Lex Pompeia of 89 and it had received Latin rights after the Social War of 91 to 88 BC, allowing its leading families to attain Roman citizenship through holding local office. Far from being a cultural backwater, it has been argued that Verona was equally if not more Hellenized than Rome, giving Catullus early acquaintance with the Greek language.⁸⁰ If Catullus was educated in the province, he would have had the choice of some famous Greek teachers (*grammatici*)⁸¹ and the most eminent of the Italian teachers, Valerius Cato.⁸² Valerius Cato may have given Catullus early exposure to the very latest in poetic fashion, the neoteric movement.⁸³ Catullus may also have had contact with some of its proponents, Cinna,⁸⁴ Furius Bibaculus,⁸⁵ and Tigidas, possible pupils of Cato and contemporaries of Catullus. Such contact does not necessarily depend on Catullus being educated in the province, but on normal social intercourse. It may be that like Horace a generation later Catullus was formally educated at Rome.

Wiseman has argued that his Transpadane background would have given Catullus a sense of traditional morality that was very much lost in Rome.⁸⁶ Rural communities certainly had long been associated with industry, honest dealings and upright living, while urban life was considered increasingly decadent.⁸⁷ While Catullus attacks Mamurra for various vices and expresses traditional attitudes to marriage in some poems, the overall impression of the poems is of a free and unrestrained *bon viveur*.⁸⁸ One only has to consider Catullus' affair with Lesbia and such poems as lvi, addressed to Cato, to understand the urbanity of Catullus' moral code. These cannot be explained away as

necessary for public image like some of Cicero's extravagancies. The poems also do not back up Wiseman's picture of rural morality: the account given by the door in poem lxvii of a father standing in for his impotent son and a string of adulterers could be set as easily in Rome as in Brixia and Verona. Further there is the adult male-male relationship between Quintius and Aufillenus (poem c), which I discuss further in chapter 3, which does not fit with conventional morality.

Several commentators have assumed that a Transpadane background would have been a serious liability to Catullus establishing himself at Rome. So for example, Wray, assuming that Catullus spent the larger part of his life in Cisalpine Gaul, suggests that the Latin of Rome was not his first language, but one he had to learn.⁸⁹ This begs the question of where Catullus went to school and overplays hints of local dialect in the poems. He calls attention to dialect formations in poem xlv, although this poem has no connection with Cisalpine Gaul, but with another area of Italy, showing rather that his family was not restricted to one geographical location. Wray also speaks of Catullus' feelings of inferiority and resentment due to not having been born at Rome (*urbanus*). He considers negative references that Catullus makes about Verona, that time spent there is 'not only a negative status mark (lxviii 27 *turpe*) but a positive torment (lxviii 30 *miserum*,)' yet he ignores Catullus' very positive comments about Sirmio (xxxi 4: *quam te libenter quamque laetus in viso* 'how pleased, how happy I am to see you again').⁹⁰

Wray also argues that Catullus' attacks on such as Pompey and the 'descendants of great-hearted Remus' in poem lviii show that Catullus was 'no scion of Romulus.'⁹¹ The problems with this argument are several: we do not know for sure that Pompey was born in Rome and Catullus speaks of Cicero as a grandson of Romulus (*Romuli nepotum*), yet he was a new man from Arpinum. Furthermore, foremost among the new associates of Lesbia

in poem xxxvii, is Egnatius, who is not only from Spain, but is pilloried for his foreign habits by Catullus. I cannot therefore agree with Wray's conclusion: 'Catullus thus appears in his poems as an imperfectly colonized Italian subject of Rome and of a Roman discourse that he possesses by mastery, but never fully owns by membership.'⁹²

Underlying the arguments of Wray (and others), is the assumption that a Roman-born man (*urbanus*) had higher status than one born in the provinces; this needs challenging.⁹³ Firstly, we do not know where many of the Romans that we know by name were born; even Julius Caesar is only assumed to have been born in Rome. Secondly, the place of birth is often not recorded, suggesting that it was not a matter of great significance. A third consideration is how geographically spread the estate of an élite Roman might have been; Catullus' family owned land outside Cisalpine Gaul, as well as in various locations within the province. At what point did owning land in a particular province and making visits to it make a Roman 'provincial' rather than 'urban'? Catullus after all makes it very clear that his home is Rome, his life is spent there, and his possessions are there, not at Verona.⁹⁴ This suggests that he felt 'Roman' as much as anyone.

It is also notable that Catullus does not betray any desire to conceal his background; as mentioned above, he waxes lyrical about Sirmio and he tells his audience openly of his Transpadane background in a poem attacking Spanish Egnatius (xxxix 13: *aut Transpadanus, ut meos quoque attingam*). Likewise both Plinii expressed pride in their Transpadane blood.⁹⁵ D'Arms has also pointed out how an anecdote by Pliny the Younger is also particularly revealing about the high status of a provincial man, even on his first day at Rome: 'At a *convivium* in Rome, Pliny reports that he reclined next to the distinguished consular Fadius Rufinus, who had on his other side a fellow *municeps*, who had first set foot in the city on that very day.'⁹⁶ D'Arms makes three important points regarding this

provincial guest: ‘Firstly, that a *vir municipalis* on his first day in Rome could be a guest at a grand private dinner; secondly, that he could recline on the same couch as men of consular standing; thirdly, that he could be cultivated enough to hold his own in literary table-talk.’ Pliny presents therefore a different, far more positive picture of the provincial in Rome.⁹⁷ We may compare poem li, which appears to present Catullus at a *convivium*, possibly at the house of Metellus Celer where he may have an entrée due to Celer’s governorship of Cisalpine Gaul.

Instead of being far from the hustle and bustle of life at Rome and a political backwater, the presence of a proconsular governor ensured that the élite families of Cisalpine Gaul had contact with important Roman politicians and their entourages. The governors were by no means insignificant figures; in 62, the eminent soldier and politician Metellus Celer was governor and from 58 to 49, it was Caesar himself. Even though Caesar was very much engaged with his wars in Gaul and Britain, he spent almost every winter in the province, and his visits to Catullus’ father can be dated to the mid fifties. Cisalpine Gaul was the venue for one of the major political meetings of the decade, the conference at Luca, in 56, where Caesar, Pompey and Crassus renewed their allegiance to each other and no doubt attempted to map out much of the political future of Rome for the next few years. The number of other political and ‘society’ figures who attended this and other less high-profile occasions must have been considerable.

One of Catullus’ poems appears to reflect this unexpectedly cosmopolitan social scene; poem xliii recounts how Ameana is described as being considered beautiful by the *Provincia*, even when compared to Lesbia.⁹⁸ Ameana was the girlfriend of Mamurra, Caesar’s Chief of Works, and Lesbia was in reality a patrician-born Clodia, with three brothers active in contemporary Roman politics, including the notorious Clodius. Fordyce

says: 'That 'the province' should gossip about Mamurra's *amica* is natural enough; Caesar wintered with his troops in Cisalpina during the Gallic campaigns and Mamurra, Caesar's chief engineer, was no doubt a familiar figure there.'⁹⁹ The mention of Lesbia, however, also requires an explanation; if Clodia Metelli, she may have been a familiar figure with her husband the governor, with her brother Clodius, a supporter of Caesar, and possibly as a visitor to the Valerii Catulli.¹⁰⁰

The province was also a favoured recruiting ground, with some strong areas of support for Pompey. Picenum was his family territory, but he also had clients throughout the Po Valley grateful for the partial enfranchisement brought about by his father. Soldiers from the area had an impact on Roman politics on several occasions: in a letter from 56 BC, Cicero mentions 'a large force is expected from Picenum and the Po Valley' to counteract the forces of Clodius.¹⁰¹ In 53 BC, Caesar was lent a legion raised in the area by Pompey. The return of this legion became highly controversial in the negotiations surrounding Caesar's return to Rome, as it potentially gave Pompey a two-legion advantage over Caesar. Caesar's involvement with various attempts to broaden enfranchisement would also have developed his *amicitiae* in the province. The attempt in 65 was led by Crassus as censor, showing links with all three triumvirs.

It would be easy to assume that as a non-enfranchised *provincia*, geographically distant from Rome, Cisalpine Gaul would have little or no voting impact. As has been mentioned, however, there were various citizen communities in colonies and other towns, and governors could also make individual grants of citizenship. As regards its geographical location, Millar has commented that even for enfranchised areas, closer to Rome, 'It...remains very difficult...to assess the significance of participation in the political process by voters from outside Rome, in the novel circumstances, characteristic of

this precise period, of the extension of Roman citizenship to most of Italy.’ As the only census between Sulla and Augustus took place in 70 BC, it is not clear how those eligible actually were officially enrolled in voting tribes or centuries at Rome. In general, the similar background and economic interests of Italian gentry and the Roman senatorial order would have ensured their interests were looked after without their needing to lobby or vote at Rome.

Where conflicts of opinion arose, however, the municipal vote was important, and Taylor points out how there were important links between the Roman nobility and municipal aristocracies: ‘With this aristocracy, the leaders of their communities, the Roman nobility often established rights of hospitality. Municipal leaders could be helpful in swinging the election districts for the noble and his friends’.¹⁰² Elections also could provoke conflict. Ambitious Italians following such role models as Marius and Cicero in seeking political office, would come into direct competition with established Roman families.¹⁰³ Municipal votes could then be of great importance as Cicero points out in his advice to his brother Marcus when he was standing for the consulship: ‘The burden of Quintus’ advice is that Marcus should win friends, first of all among the nobles, but also among the knights and the municipal men of influence.’¹⁰⁴

That these municipal men should include men from Cisalpine Gaul is surprising perhaps, but as Millar has pointed out: ‘Cicero, looking ahead in 65 to the consular elections for 63, was already considering the importance of ‘Gallia’ in the voting and was thinking of going there for some time to raise support.’¹⁰⁵ He also cites Hirtius who said in his book of Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico* that Caesar planned in 50 BC to spend time in the *municipia* and *coloniae* of Cisalpine Gaul to summon up support for Mark Antony, but on hearing that Antony had been successfully elected augur, spent his time thanking them

instead, thereby ensuring support for his own candidacy for 48.¹⁰⁶ As Millar comments, ‘Hirtius’ reference to Caesar’s appreciation of the *frequentia* of supporters of Antonius from the *municipia* and *coloniae* of Gallia Cisalpina has a quite concrete meaning: significant numbers of them must have gone to Rome and voted.’¹⁰⁷ Significant numbers, in electoral terms, however, did not have to mean a large scale delegation; as Millar continues: The expression...may well indicate no more than a few hundred *legati* from the towns, along with some other private persons.’

One of the reasons that Cisalpine citizens had significant voting power may be owing to their distribution in the rural tribes which were far smaller than the four urban tribes. Furthermore, they were allotted to fourteen of the thirty-one rural tribes. These tribes were the voting units in the *comitia tributa* and *comitia plebis*, which elected the lower magistracies and were the chief legislative bodies. Men such as Catullus, present in Rome, could have a considerable influence on their own tribal vote and on that of others with Cisalpine connections, a fact he may have been advertising by emphasising his Cisalpine roots in this poems. For legislation not attracting great interest, a few men could have a major impact as Cicero implies when he claims that attendance in some tribes was on occasion so low that men were drafted from other tribes to make up numbers.¹⁰⁸ For elections where turn-out would be higher, the spread of the Cisalpine vote was still very useful to those who gained their support, as Taylor highlights, in explaining the Senate’s opposition to Caesar’s command of Cisalpine Gaul: ‘in a province much of which was inhabited by men with full citizen rights, divided among nearly half the rural tribes, he would be able to maintain strong pressure on Roman elections.’¹⁰⁹

It also appears that a lack of men of senatorial rank in Cisalpine Gaul could play to the advantage of those who wished to stand for the lower offices; in defending the

successful candidate Plancius against the accusations of electoral malpractice by the unsuccessful M Iuventius Laterensis, Cicero argued that Plancius' home area had been much more active in supporting him whereas Iuventius' hometown Tusculum was unmoved by someone standing for a minor office. A quaestorship may not ennoble a family like a consulship, but its senatorial status still had a major effect on the family of the magistrate: sons of senators were likely to be enrolled in the eighteen centuries of *equites equo publico*, with indisputable equestrian status and the right to vote in the *comitia centuriata*.¹¹⁰ Such easily displayed status symbols would be attractive to ambitious provincial families, especially as no official census took place after 70 BC until the time of Augustus.

Coming from Cisalpine Gaul did not mean, therefore, that a political career was automatically ruled out for Catullus. Indeed, the opposite was the case with the considerable influx of Italian gentry into the higher orders of Roman society after the Social War; as Earl commented, 'In the Ciceronian age the pressure of the new men was more insistent. The effects of the enfranchisement of Italy began to make themselves felt and the emerging monarchic faction leaders, first Sulla and then Pompey and Caesar, offered wider opportunities for self-advancement.'¹¹¹ Cisalpine Gaul was no exception, as Wiseman has pointed out: 'it was the Cenomani of Verona who sent the first detectable Gallic senators to Rome – the Pobjicii in the seventies BC, followed by a possible Caesarian senator, a praetor under the Triumvirs, and an Augustan moneyer.'¹¹² Catullus had competition therefore, and not just from men from Verona but also Brixia, both towns we associate with him. 'Unfortunately, a troop of other brilliant and ambitious provincials – several from his own Transpadane district, like C Helvius Cinna – had arrived in the capital city with the same goal in mind, and the competition was rough.'¹¹³ Skinner may

overplay the internal competition, but is right to stress that Catullus was not an isolated figure at Rome.

Cinna was not the only contemporary of Catullus mentioned in the poems who was from Cisalpine Gaul. Catullus' friend Varus might have been Alfenus Varus, the jurist or Quintilius Varus, who became a great friend of Virgil and Horace, both of whom came from Cremona. Either would have been a useful contact for the young Catullus in Rome. Furius Bibaculus has already been mentioned as a possible identification for Furius of the poems. Ausonius suggests that the Nepos of Catullus dedicatory first poem was Cornelius Nepos, an influential figure in the literary world, friendly with men such as Cicero and Atticus.¹¹⁴ There is some inscriptional evidence which might connect some other names in Catullus' poems with the province, but it is too weak for any decisive argument.¹¹⁵ While none of these men was in the position to give Catullus much of a step-up the political ladder at Rome, they were not insignificant figures in their own right.

Catullus' circle at Rome was not restricted, however, to friends from home. Wiseman points out his acquaintance with the élite: 'He was acquainted with Cicero, Hortensius and Caesar, and was an intimate friend of at least two young Roman *nobiles* – a 'flosculus Juventiorum'... and a Manlius Torquatus.'¹¹⁶ There were also men from up-and-coming municipal families from other areas of Italy such as Cornificius, Asinius and Marrucine Pollio, and Mamurra. Catullus' intimate friend, however, was the notable orator, Calvus. Calvus' standing in society was also supported by his undoubted wealth of which we learn indirectly in Suetonius' *Life of Augustus*. Suetonius says that Augustus lived first in what had been the home of Calvus, close to the Forum, but then moved into an 'equally modest' house, where Hortensius had lived on the Palatine.¹¹⁷ As Edwards has pointed out, Hortensius' house appears to have been rather more prestigious to his

contemporaries: 'Cicero remarks that Lentulus, consul in 49 BCE, had his eye on Hortensius' house as a prize in the event of a Pompeian victory.'¹¹⁸ Calvus' house, by implication, was therefore not an inconsiderable piece of real estate in the heart of Rome.

Calvus was unusual in that it appears, like Cicero and Caelius Rufus, he undertook no form of military service in anticipation of his political career. Catullus it seems was more conventional and it is to his service abroad that I now turn.

SERVICE IN BITHYNIA

An important event in Catullus' life that we know a little about is his service abroad. As discussed above, this is likely to have taken place from 57 to 56 BC. The recent history of the province had been turbulent. Mithridates had declared war when Bithynia was bequeathed to Rome on the death of King Nicomedes, in or before 74 BC.¹¹⁹ L Licinius Lucullus, who had received a special command in the area, was somewhat unfairly superseded by Pompey, who gained the command of Cilicia and Bithynia by the Lex Manilia of 66 BC. After conquering Mithridates, Pompey began to create Roman provinces in the area in the winter of 65 and spring of 64.¹²⁰ Returning to Rome in 62 BC, he submitted his Eastern Settlement, including the newly created provinces of Bithynia-Pontus and Syria to the Senate for ratification. This signalled at last that the threat of Mithridates of Pontus, arguable Rome's most persistent foe, was no more. The ratification, however, was only achieved in Caesar's consulship. Catullus's visit, therefore, was to a very young province associated with the awesome figure of Mithridates; this situation raises the questions of why he chose to go there in particular over other provinces, why he went at all, and, related to this, why his praetor chose him?

Dealing with these questions in reverse order, the first point is that it was standard practice to attach to the governor's official household, a number of men who acted as friends and companions during the tour of duty. C Memmius, Catullus' praetor, had literary connections as he was the dedicatee of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* and like others, he may wished to have a poet with him; Fulvius Nobilior took Ennius, and Scipio Aemilianus took Lucilius. Catullus' motives in going to a province are less easy to detect. Literary inspiration was one possibility; Ennius wrote a eulogy on Epirus in the *Annales*, and a drama on the siege of the city (the *Ambracia*). Quinn adds four further reasons for trying to get a job on the staff of a provincial governor. It was 'a way of seeing the world, and a way of attracting attention to yourself from those who might help to advance your career in politics or the army, it also cut costs; and of course if your governor was anything like a sport, there was a chance of making something on the side'¹²¹ This latter point is also echoed by Tatum: 'Prevailing Roman sensibilities regarding provincial administration unquestionably countenanced a good deal of corruption before allowing itself to become outraged, and it was expected that service on a governor's staff ought to be profitable.'¹²² While military service was no longer a requirement for standing for office, as mentioned above, it was still conventional, especially for new men as Wiseman argues: 'But though a man with talent for the law courts could get away with hardly any military service at all, most would-be senators, particularly *novi homines* who had to create their own qualifications, would prefer to gain their reputations on the field of battle as equestrian officers.'¹²³ This did not necessarily entail being an elected military tribune; it was equally acceptable to be part of the additional staff nominated by the governor.

Either position gave valuable experience for the demands of a future post as *quaestor* or governor, and it is possible that Catullus held an official position in Memmius'

retinue; as Dickey has pointed out, *milites* and *commilitones* do not fit into hexameter, and this is possibly why neither appears in poetry, but are substituted by *miles*, *viri*, *iuvenes*, and less frequently, *comites* and *cohortes*, the words used by Catullus in poem xxviii (*Pisonis comites, cohors inanis*).¹²⁴ A military tribunate carried automatic equestrian status which may have been a valuable prize to Catullus.¹²⁵ If Catullus held this military position, it might explain why Memmius was able to exploit Catullus so fully as Catullus so vividly describes in poem xxviii.

Catullus' comments on his lack of financial and contact-making success strongly suggest that these were among his motives. Gold has pointed out that, 'Whenever Catullus mentions Memmius, it is always in the context of money.' She continues: 'Catullus had gone to Bithynia hoping to return rich; Memmius fell short of Catullus' expectations.'¹²⁶ In fact, far from making money, Catullus claims in poem xxviii that he was out of pocket, without even his expenses met by Memmius. His journey home, which he looks forward to in poem xlvi, with its opportunities for visiting the various attractions on the way, is independent of Memmius and his comrades, and therefore at his own cost. As Catullus could clearly afford this, he could not have been in dire need of money, and so his disappointment points to his wish to have a large amount of money for a purpose over and above normal living expenses; a campaign for office would require such substantial cash reserves. It would also requires the *amici* Catullus explicitly says he was seeking through the trip (xxviii 13 *pete nobiles amicos!*). If Catullus was content to remain within his own social rank, and not seek political advancement, there is no reason why he should be seeking noble friends; his literary aspirations did not require this. As Mayer has said of non-ambitious men: 'The decision to stay within their own social rank had important

consequences – they could afford to associate with whom they chose rather than seek out those who might advance their careers.’¹²⁷

If Catullus was seeking influential friends, Bithynia was a good choice. There were clear connections with major figures at Rome from across the political spectrum; Lucullus, husband of the younger Clodia had fought there, Pompey had ended the war, Caesar had been a great friend of King Nicomedes, fleeing there after becoming unpopular with Sulla, and Catullus’ praetor was the anti-triumvirate politician, Memmius. It was likely to be a choice to impress: a new province as mentioned above, Bithynia held an exotic aura of danger from its connection with Mithridates yet Catullus was very unlikely to be facing anything to compare with the terrifying Germans that those accompanying Caesar had to contend with, as mentioned earlier. Poem x confirms that Bithynia was still very much ‘news’ (x. 7: *quo modo se haberet* ‘how are things there now’), as well as familiar enough that Varus’ girlfriend was aware that the local luxury item was litter bearers. This combination may have made Bithynia more attractive than the other provinces chosen by his friends; Spain and Macedonia had been long settled and Macedonia with Caesar’s father-in-law as governor would not have been an attractive proposition. Bithynia also held out the prospect of financial gain and with its governor being a literary man, Catullus may have had hopes that he would be allowed to benefit both from Memmius’ official allowance and from the pockets of the provincials.

The young Catullus therefore was seeking money, prestige, contacts and, it should not be forgotten, the adventure of travelling through the famous towns of Asia. He was probably in his late twenties (twenty-eight if born in 84), not yet eligible for office at Rome, as the earliest he could stand for the quaestorship was thirty. His going abroad on provincial service strongly points to hopes of a conventional political career; he had

fulfilled the semi-obligatory first stage. His aspirations in the main, however, were not realised, and his great disappointment would be all the more understandable if the cash he had hoped to raise was to springboard his political debut as a *novus homo*. One asset was still his, however; his poetic powers, and he released a stinging revenge on his praetor through his verses. How he may have continued to explore the potential of his poetry to fulfil his ambitions at Rome is the subject of the next two chapters.

Endnotes

¹ Bernard Malamud *Dublin Lives* (1979, 20).

² Bardon (1970).

³ Gaius according to Apuleius and St Jerome, and Quintus according to Pliny the Elder.

⁴ St Jerome *A. Abr.* 1930: *Gaius Valerius scriptor lyricus Veronae nascitur*; *A. Abr.* 1960: *Catullus XXX aetatis anno Romae moritur*.

⁵ In a letter to M Haupt, in 1837, Lachman suggested that the *age* at death was probably correct, but the *date* was wrong; St Jerome had confused Cn Octavius Gnaei filius, consul in 87, for the consul of 76, Cn Octavius Marci filius.

⁶ Schwabe, (*Quaestiones Catullianae* Giessen, 1862) rejecting St Jerome's death date, suggests that the age at death was corrupted from XXXIII.

⁷ Frank (1928) suggested that the two consulships of L Cornelius Cinna caused the confusion.

⁸ Nepos *Atticus* 12.

⁹ Ovid *Amores* 3.9.61-62: *iuvenalia... tempora*. ('youthful temples').

¹⁰ Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 10.28.1.

¹¹ Varro in the treatise *De Die Natali* 14, of the Roman Grammarian Censorinus.

¹² Galen 29, 199: *prima quidem adolescentum secunda vigentium, seu iuvenum, tertia mediorum, quarta senum*.

¹³ Isidore *Etymol.* 11.2.4.

¹⁴ Eyben (1993, 6).

¹⁵ Under Sulla, the minimum age for the consulship was 42.

¹⁶ Cicero *Rosc.* 3: *Ego si quid liberius dixero, vel occultum esse propterea quod nondum ad rem publicam accessi, vel ignosci adulescentiae meae poterit*. ('but if I am the one who speaks too freely, what I say will either be ignored because I have not yet embarked on a political career, or else will be pardoned on account of my youth.' (Trans. Berry, Penguin 2002).

¹⁷ Cicero *Brut.* 81.280.

¹⁸ Tacitus *Ann.* iv. 34.5 *carmina Bibaculi et Catulli referta contumeliis Caesarum leguntur, sed ipse divus Iulius, ipse divus Augustus et tulere ista et reliquere* (trans. Grant, Penguin 1956).

¹⁹ Martin/Woodman (1989, 181).

²⁰ Caesar began to promote his great-nephew in the mid-forties; adopted by testament in 45, Octavian was made *pontifex* the same year and designated *magister equitum* in 44, despite his lack of military service.

²¹ Martial 4.14.13-14.

²² Poem xxxvii would fit to a similar period of disillusion as poem xi; he robustly threatens to orally rape 200 of her lovers at one go, yet also describes his love pathetically: *amata tantum quantum amabitur nulla* (xxxvii 12). Further he comments on the *boni beatique* as being in love with her, as well as *semitarii moechi*, which is more positive than her status as a crossroads whore in poem lviii. In poem lxxvi, his love is described as *taeter morbum* ('a foul disease').

²³ Pompey's games in 55 BC may have inspired the reference to the lions as six hundred were used.

²⁴ Seneca *Contr.* 7.4.7.

²⁵ Tacitus *Dial.* 21.4 suggests by the word *secunda* that there were at least three attacks (Fordyce 1961, 223).

- ²⁶ The *sella curulis* implies the rank of curule aedile, praetor, consul or censor.
- ²⁷ Mommsen, T. (1920) *Römische Geschichte*. Berlin, 3, 332. Quoted by Barrett (1972, 23f).
- ²⁸ Cicero *In Vat.* 4.
- ²⁹ Corbeill (1996, 49).
- ³⁰ Epstein (1987, 122f).
- ³¹ Millar (1998, 190) describes the year 50 BC as the ‘last in which the institutions of the *res publica* functioned in their traditional manner of open competition and conflict.’
- ³² Maas (1942, 79-82).
- ³³ Cicero *Ad Fam.* 7.32.1.
- ³⁴ Rowland (1970, 27).
- ³⁵ The Roman year was 355 days, and in alternate years, extra days (intercalation) were meant to be added in February, announced by the *pontifices*. With these extra days, the year became a day too long, resulting in it becoming behind the seasons over time – a month over thirty years. However, the opposite was happening in the second and first centuries BC as the intercalation frequently failed to happen. This could mean the rate at which the calendar would get out of synchronisation with the seasons was nearly ten days per year. Bickerman (1980, 45) has shown that in 190, it was ahead by 117 days and in 168 by 72 days. Then, between 140 and 70 BC, it was roughly correct, but it had become 90 days ahead again by 46 BC. Julius Caesar intercalated these days and introduced a stable year of 365 days, with a leap year.
- ³⁶ Rowland (1970, 27).
- ³⁷ Curran (1969, 171f).
- ³⁸ Poem x gives Bithynia as his province, with Cinna. Poem xxviii identifies his praetor as Memmius.
- ³⁹ Cicero *QF* 1.2.116; *Vat.* 33.
- ⁴⁰ Broughton *MRR* II 210: Amisos coins.
- ⁴¹ Poem xxviii.
- ⁴² Poem xii 14-15: *nam sudaria Saetaba ex Hiberis / miserunt mihi muneri Fabullus / et Veranius*. (‘For Fabullus and Veranius sent Saetaban napkins to me as a present from the country of the Hiberi.’)
- ⁴³ Poem xxv 7: *catagraphosque Thynos*.
- ⁴⁴ Cicero *Pis.* 17.40; 40.96.
- ⁴⁵ Its other meaning is slave or serving boy, like *παῖς*.
- ⁴⁶ Weidemann (1989, 86). He also cites Cicero *Ad Att.* 6.2.2 where he talks of Quintus after the ceremony: ‘The boy Cicero, or rather now young man.’
- ⁴⁷ Dickey (2002, 193); Cicero *Phil.* 13.24.
- ⁴⁸ Wiseman (1969a).
- ⁴⁹ Sandy (1971, 126f).
- ⁵⁰ Wiseman (1974, 109f) discusses this with reference to O Skutsch (1969) *BICS* XVI 38.
- ⁵¹ Wiseman (1974, 110) makes this connection between order and date, and so considers ‘the developed technique...is beginning to appear in some of the early poems to Lesbia.’ Hence he concludes ‘that there is good reason *not* to put the beginning of the affair before 56 BC.’
- ⁵² Cf Cicero *De leg.* 2.2/5 where he explains how he has two *patria*e; the *municipium* of his birth, Arpinum, and Rome by citizenship.
- ⁵³ Sirmio as *lar*: Poem xxxi 8f: *ac peregrino/ labore fessi venimus Larem ad nostrum* (‘and worn out by foreign work, we have come to our own Lar’). Rome as *domus*: Poem lxxviii 34f: *quod Romae vivimus; illa domus, illa mihi sedes, illic mea carpitur aestas* (‘because I live in Rome; my home is there, there is my base, my life is spent there’).
- ⁵⁴ Tacitus (*Hist* iii. 8) names Verona as a colony, although Pliny, who came from the province, omits it from his list of *coloniae* in the province.
- ⁵⁵ Caesar left Rome in March, 58BC. He specifically mentions being in Cisalpine Gaul for the winters of 58/7, 57/6, 55/54 and 53/2.
- ⁵⁶ Mirabella Roberti, M. (1966). *EAA* 7.352.
- ⁵⁷ Mattingly-Sydenham, *RIC*, 1. 81.
- ⁵⁸ Wiseman (1971, 66). The property qualification was raised to 1 200 000 in 13 BC.
- ⁵⁹ Suetonius *Calig.* 36.1. cf. *CIL* xiv, 2466.
- ⁶⁰ Wiseman (1979b, 63f) has argued that this trading background had some effect on the diction of the poems, in particular inspiring the idea of *fides* and *foedus* in personal relationships and the use of the business language of loss and profit. It is equally possible however that Catullus takes *fides* and *foedus* from the language of political alliance and his image of an abacus used for counting kisses owes more to the ability of this accountant’s tool to lose its figures with a simple shake than to the accountant who uses it.

⁶¹ Edwards (1993, 187).

⁶² Brunt (1988, 9).

⁶³ For example, in poem xli, Ameana demanded 10 *sestertia* for her services, and Catullus paid this sum to the pimp Silo in a separate incident described in poem ciii.

⁶⁴ Taylor (1968, 469f) pointed out that Laberius was barred from the reserved benches in the theatre, despite having been given 500 000 sesterces by Caesar suggesting the census was only one part of qualifying for equestrian status.

⁶⁵ Rhetoric was the main focus of the secondary curriculum, preparing young Romans for the various forms of public speaking that would be required of them; to defend or prosecute in court (forensic oratory), to give speeches in the Senate or Forum in support or against proposed actions (deliberative oratory), and to make other public speeches, such as funeral eulogies (epideictic oratory). Cicero in *De Oratore* 2. 115 describes the functions of the orator (*officia oratoris*) as being to teach, to charm and to move.

⁶⁶ Kirby (1997, 17) points out that in Cicero's *Brutus*, 'The development of Roman eloquence is charted on an evolutionary course from its early efflorescence in Cornelius Cethegus and the elder Cato, moving towards its full flowering in Antonius, Crassus, Caesar, Calvus, Hortensius, and – or course – Cicero.'

⁶⁷ Bradley (1991, 164): 'By and large, it can be accepted that young men of the senatorial class often set up their own households at the time of their first marriage – if indeed they had not already done so.' He cites the example of Caelius Rufus, commenting that Cicero 'argued that a single young man close to 30 who was embarking on a public career could be expected to have his own residence in Rome.'

⁶⁸ Young (1967-8, 267-8).

⁶⁹ Cf lviii 59-60, where he again writes of his girlfriend as dearer than anyone to him and xxxvii 11-14 where he has spent much energy ('fought great wars' *magna bella pugnata*) not on important Roman duties but on this woman. Catullus' comments need to be considered in the context of his time; a *paterfamilias* could impel his son to divorce if he felt it beneficial for the family as a whole.

⁷⁰ Dickey (2002, 123); Cicero *Ver.* 3. 155.

⁷¹ Dickey (2002, 123f; 280). Petronius 11.3, 123.2, 91.2, 129, 1.

⁷² Wray (2001, 51). *Odyssey* 1. 3-6: 'and he saw many cities of men and learned how they thought, and he suffered many pains on the sea, pains within his heart. The suffering was in order to preserve his own life and to bring his comrades home, the latter of which he failed to do.' (Wray's emphasis).

⁷³ It is also noteworthy how in the two poems mentioned (lxv and lxviii) there are three instances of Catullus comparing himself to a female; the Daulian mother, the girl with her apple, and Laodamia.

⁷⁴ It is just possible that the later elegists' subversion of the *topos* of funeral rites may have been inspired by Catullus' poems about his dead lover: Catullus' poems provides the unusual precedent of mentioning no name, no ancestors, and no mention of great deeds. The ashes of his 'brother' are indeed 'mute' (ci 4: *mutam*) as no details of his life are known.

⁷⁵ Gruen (1974, 118): 'Junior officers and lieutenants of Caesar show a predominance of non-Roman and equestrian families.'

⁷⁶ Wiseman (1971, 32).

⁷⁷ Caesar *BG* 1. 39.2 (Trans. Handford, 1951 Penguin, my emphasis).

⁷⁸ Cf Gruen (1974, 116): 'The Gallic wars were lengthy, arduous, and often complicated.'

⁷⁹ Wiseman (1976, 16): 'Cisalpine Gaul was a very rich province, and the richest city in it was Patavium, with 500 citizens registered at the census of AD 14 as in possession of the equestrian property qualification.'

⁸⁰ Wray (2001, 43): 'Verona's hellenization at the time, through commerce of every kind, may thus have been more profound than that at Rome.'

⁸¹ Suetonius *Gramm.* 3.

⁸² Suetonius *Gramm.* 4: *Significat enim haud dubie Valerium Catonem poetam simul grammaticumque notissimum.*

⁸³ An anonymous fragment records of Cato, *Latina Siren / qui solus legit et facit poetas*. Crowther (1971a) argues that the role of Cato might have been minimal as regards Catullus and the Neoteri. He states that there is no evidence that he taught Catullus and his friends, but see below on Cinna and Furius.

⁸⁴ Cinna, a fellow Transpadane, is mentioned as *meus sodalis* in Poem x, referring to the time in Bithynia, and is praised for his very learned Alexandrian poem *Zmyrna* in Poem xiv. The identification with Cato's pupil is highly likely.

⁸⁵ Cremona-born Furius Bibaculus could be the Furius of poems xi, xvi and xxiii. Two fragments of his poems mention a Cato, one of which portrays Furius as the devoted pupil to an ageing teacher (fr. 1, 2 Morel).

⁸⁶ Wiseman (1985, 110f).

⁸⁷ Cato the Elder (*or. fr.* 128 Malc.) mentioned the *parsimonia* and *industria* of his youth as a farmer in the Sabine countryside and Tacitus (*Ann.* III 55.4f) named Vespasian as the prime example of the *domestica parsimonia*, characteristic of the Italian municipalities. Cicero voiced his concerns over licentiousness, childlessness, and gambling among others, while Sallust condemns all forms of *luxuria*. Cicero *Marc.* 23; Cicero *Cael.* 44; Sallust *Cat.* 13.3.

⁸⁸ The attacks on Mamurra are discussed in detail in chapter four. Wiseman (1985, 107f) cites poems lxi and lxii for their traditional morality and attitude to marriage.

⁸⁹ Wray (2001, 44): 'It is not hard to discern, beneath the laughter, seamlines of specifically Italic anxiety and resentment along the fabric of represented subjectivity performed by the speaker of Catullus' poems.'

⁹⁰ Wray (2001, 44). He also perhaps misses the point of these comments in poem lxviii as they are not necessarily negative about Verona itself, but about his general absence from Rome and his distress at his brother's death.

⁹¹ Wray (2001, 45).

⁹² Wray (2001, 45).

⁹³ Cf also Tatum (1997).

⁹⁴ Poem lxviii 34 quoted above.

⁹⁵ Pliny the Elder *NH* praef. I; Pliny the Younger's many inscriptions generally relate to his largesse, for example, *CIL* v 5262-4.

⁹⁶ D'Arms (1990, 319); Pliny *Ep.* 9.24.4.

⁹⁷ On the political aspirations of the guest, D'Arms (1990, 319) continues: 'If Rufinus' fellow *municeps* had political ambitions – of these there is of course no word in Pliny – I suspect that the informal setting of this *convivium* would have offered an appropriate opportunity for furthering them.'

⁹⁸ Poem xliii 6-7: *ten Prouincia narrat esse bellam? / tecum Lesbia nostra comparatur?*

⁹⁹ Fordyce (1961, 196).

¹⁰⁰ It has been said that all tours of duty were unaccompanied by wives, but it is unlikely that this would have been strictly adhered to, certainly in the more accessible provinces. Likewise today, military personnel are far more likely to receive visits from spouses in places like Cyprus than the Falklands. We know that Clodia did not stay for her husband's whole tour as she was causing scandals in Rome in 62 and was visited there by Cicero. (Plutarch *Cic.* 29; Cicero *Fam.* v. 2.6).

¹⁰¹ Cicero *QF* ii 3 4.

¹⁰² Taylor (1949, 38).

¹⁰³ Gruen (1974, 208) points out that Sulla gave added impetus to the ambitions of the municipal aristocracy when he doubled the size of the senate: 'Sulla's expansion of the senate opened up positions that enabled numerous individuals to abandon equestrian origins and take on senatorial status.'

¹⁰⁴ Taylor (1949, 8).

¹⁰⁵ Millar (1998, 29).

¹⁰⁶ [Caesar] *BG* 8.50.

¹⁰⁷ Millar (1998, 190).

¹⁰⁸ Cicero *Sest.* 51/109: 'We often see many *leges* being passed. I leave aside those that are carried in such a way that barely five people are found to cast their vote, and those from a different *tribus*.' (Trans. Millar, 1998, 154).

¹⁰⁹ Taylor (1949, 58).

¹¹⁰ This was the old military organisation which met in the Campus Martius to elect consuls and praetors as these offices held military *imperium*. Of a total of 193 centuries, there were seventy centuries of first class men, who possessed more than 50 000 sesterces, and eighteen centuries of *equites equo publico*. The highly influential first vote (the prerogative) was allotted to these centuries, further enhancing the advantage that the rich held through possessing 88 out of the 193 votes. Voting stopped when a majority had been reached, meaning many centuries did not get a chance to express their opinion.

¹¹¹ Earl (1967, 51).

¹¹² Wiseman (1971, 20).

¹¹³ Skinner (1993, 62). Cf Wiseman (1971, 20): 'From Brixia, the other main centre of the Cenomani, came an ill-fated tribune of 44 (Helvius Cinna the poet) and a late-Augustan aedile.'

¹¹⁴ Ausonius *Ecl.* i. i. 'cui dono lepidum novum libellum?' / *Veronensis ait poeta quondam / inventoque dedit statim Nepoti*.

¹¹⁵ Wiseman (1979b, 163f) convincingly argues against a Cisalpine background for the Vibennii, Iuventiis, Silo and Veranius.

¹¹⁶ Wiseman (1971, 51).

¹¹⁷ Suetonius *Iul.* 72: *sed nihilo minus aedibus modicis Hortensianis*.

¹¹⁸ Edwards (1993, 167, note 77).

¹¹⁹ Bithynia had been seen as a useful buffer state against Mithridates VI of Pontus, and the Parthian empire beyond. Mithridates had been responsible for the slaughter of allegedly 80 000 Romans in Asia.

¹²⁰ Livy *Per.* 102f.

¹²¹ Quinn (1972a, 157f) Cf Gold (1987, 57): 'The writers and poets went as *comites* to the governor, hoping to gain exactly what everyone else wanted: a political opportunity, travel, contact with influential people, and pocket money.'

¹²² Tatum (1999, 56).

¹²³ Wiseman (1971, 143).

¹²⁴ Dickey (2002, 291). *Comites* and *cohortes* are used by Lucilius (4.516; 3.360).

¹²⁵ Taylor (1968, 469f) has argued that as a governor had the *imperium* to award a gold ring, this may have been one of Catullus' motives in accompanying Memmius. Arguing against her, White (1978, 64f) makes the point that Catullus would have been unlikely to receive the reward simply as a *comes*. For the various levels of equestrian status, see the earlier discussion above.

¹²⁶ Gold (1987, 57).

¹²⁷ Mayer (1989, 6).

Chapter Three

POLITICAL VOICES IN THE LOVE POETRY

*If I hate her so much as I sometimes do, how can I love her? Can one really hate and love? Or is it only myself that I really hate?*¹

A Victorian verdict that Catullus was “the tenderest of Latin poets” seems to be based on two aspects of Catullus’ work: the love poems to Lesbia and the poems about his dead brother. But when one reads editions of Catullus today – with all the poems included – it is hardly tenderness that seems to be his main quality.² The sordid affairs of Gellius are vividly described in more poems than Catullus chose to write about his brother, for example, and it appears that his beloved brother was not considered worthy of a poem until after his death - just as only after death did Emma Gifford, the first wife of Thomas Hardy, inspire his famous love poetry. Lesbia is also not the sole subject of his poems expressing desire and affection, and many of his poems about her are more akin to the genre of invective or *flagitatio* than to amorous verse. This chapter begins with an analysis of Catullus’ various sexual relationships as depicted in his poems, re-examining his portrayal of his love life, and reassessing the role of these other relationships in the poems and their purpose.

I shall deal first with Catullus’s apparently casual relationships with women. If we believe that Catullus was responsible for the order of the poems, we need to explain one of the most glaringly provocative juxtapositions in the collection; in poem cix, Catullus declares his unending love for Lesbia (if she is *mea vita*) in the clearest terms: *aeternum hoc sanctae foedus amicitiae* (‘this everlasting pact of sacred friendship’). In the next poem, he roundly criticises Aufillena for not coming up with the sexual goods that she

promised. The principle of *variatio* is insufficient to explain this ordering, since the poems together substantially affect each other's meaning. One explanation is that a relationship with Aufillena, a prostitute, did not count as infidelity. Taken from a completely different viewpoint, it might also be argued that this poem is not about an actual love affair, but has a political agenda and should be read as political invective rather than love poetry. The provocative collocation might then be a clue to the reader that all is not quite as it seems in this poem. Its position would serve first to shock the reader, and then augment the wit of the political invective. Whether this might be true of this poem and others relating to his other casual relationships is discussed further in the first section of this chapter.

Catullus also portrayed a relationship with a young man, Juventius, and the second section deals with this relationship. Poems expressing affection for another man cannot so easily be shuffled off to the secret room in the Naples museum like the phallic symbols discovered at Pompeii. They need to be understood within the context of his time, and I consider whether the relationship fitted within the parameters of acceptable sexual behaviour, and what social and political sanctions might have applied to those who openly flouted such parameters.

In the third section of this chapter, I return to the poet's relationship with Lesbia, and first address the question of whether we are justified in assuming that any poem apparently expressing sincere love for a woman is about Lesbia, although the addressee may be simply *mea vita* or, more commonly, *mea puella*. The identity of Lesbia also affects any possible political interpretation of his relationship with this woman; for example, whether their alliance was purely sexual, what implications it had for both partners, and where it might have led. Just as marriage with one of the Kennedy sisters (or a Bush) in America might be construed as a political move, so could marriage with one of

the Claudii.³ The evidence for her identification will therefore be examined in section four of this chapter. Section five will consider what is known about Clodia Metelli, including an appraisal of the evidence provided by Cicero. A review of how socially independent and politically involved women could be in the Late Republic, and the methods used by their denigrators to undermine them (by, for example, characterising them as nymphomaniacs) will help to put Clodia in her social context. The final section will examine how Catullus describes his relationship with Lesbia in political terms, and any implications that his use of political language might have. It will also discuss the effect of the failure of the relationship with Clodius Pulcher and Clodia Metelli as a brother-sister unit and Catullus' possible reaction.

MEAE DELICIAE, PUELLA DEFUTATA AND OTHER LOVERS

It was widely accepted from the mid-Republican period of the early 2nd century BC, when Cato the Elder (239-149 BC) and Plautus (who died in c. 183) flourished, that young, élite Roman men might have pre-marital sexual relations with professional prostitutes.⁴ Such freedom was of course quite out of the question, socially, for the élite Roman women they would eventually marry. Sexual needs prompted the earlier relationships, and political affiliations often dictated their marriages. Love was not generally an issue in initiating either relationship, especially as the restricted opportunities for association between élite men and women to a large extent reduced the likelihood of pre-marital relationships being formed.⁵ The prostitutes that Cato thought suitable for occasional use were not the sort of women likely to foster a desire in an élite Roman man for a long-term relationship.

The Hellenistic influence that so pervaded Roman society from this time on was felt by many Romans to have affected moral and social customs for the worse. As Edwards

comments: ‘The place of Greek and Asiatic goods and practice in Roman life seem to have acquired a new importance, as Romans came to entertain more extensive cultural ambitions.... At the same time, the influence of eastern cultures on Roman life became the object of new anxieties.’⁶ One aspect of this was the growing number of cultivated, attractive courtesans with whom some Romans began to form long-term relationships in addition to being married. So long as this did not interfere with the production of legitimate heirs, society would turn a blind eye. A more problematic situation occurred when powerful passions caused a Roman man to be so uncontrollably in love (*insanus*) that he risked losing his sense of duty (*negotium*) and behaving in a way inappropriate for an élite Roman male. Not only could some courtesans make their partners forget their political duties, some even took an inappropriate part in those duties, a strictly male domain. Cicero goes so far as to say that Verres’ courtesan, Chelidon, was the real power behind his praetorship, an accusation apparently both plausible to his audience and damaging to Verres.⁷

By the late Republic, when Catullus lived and wrote, a new development became more apparent; not surprisingly, the idealised female role of submissiveness (*obsequium*) and staying at home weaving (*domum servavit, lanam fecit*) lacked appeal to a growing number of élite Roman women.⁸ These decided to exploit a new element of freedom caused by the growing empire of Rome. As the demands on the senatorial order increased, the men who would normally be responsible for these women, such as fathers, brothers or husbands, were required to go away from Rome, sometimes for long periods of time. This potential lack of supervision was even greater for married or widowed women, living independently from their birth families. The threat to moral order was that not only could long-term love affairs divert young men from their marital duty, but also that the

supposedly austere Roman matron was taking more control over her sexual activities, threatening the traditional institution of marriage.⁹ A wealthy widow in particular had great potential freedom and little inclination to remarry. Although the Romans praised a *univira* (woman who had known only one husband), a second marriage was encouraged especially as a woman's first marriage was often in her early to mid teens to an older partner; the young widow of childbearing age who did not seek to remarry for the procreation of Roman heirs was a social issue. If she formed long term relationships out of wedlock, not only was she forgetting her own duties, but also stopping her lover from marrying and having heirs too.¹⁰ Extra-marital sexual activity was not confined either to older women; Servilia and Caesar were both fifteen to sixteen at the time that their relationship began.

There is a political point to be made here: the whole moral outlook of Rome was based, ostensibly at least, on the political ideology of the responsible male *paterfamilias*, who had political rights and duties, and the submissive wife correctly performing her marital and reproductive duties. As Skinner pointed out: 'A woman's satisfactory performance of her marital and reproductive duties might symbolize proper moral conduct in the public sector, just as neglect of such duties was symptomatic of a collapse of civic order.'¹¹ To many Romans, open flouting of this pattern of family life attacked the basis of civic order as there was not a division of private and public life in Roman society. The reality of this concern was made very clear by the social legislation of Augustus only a generation or so later and by Cicero's oratorical practice of equating a debauched lifestyle with political disqualification, as I discussed in the introduction. The exile of Ovid was due in large part to his promotion of adultery in the face of Augustus' legislation, as he himself acknowledged.¹² It is worth a thought whether we might view the political

significance of Ovid's poetry any differently if we did not know about his exile. A second political issue is the frequent connection made by their contemporaries of greater sexual freedom for some women with their increased political involvement. Certainly their denigrators sort to associate the two ideas, and I shall discuss this further in considering Catullus' relationship with Lesbia/Clodia.

On first reading, the relationships that Catullus forms can be seen to fit within this context. There are casual sexual encounters with women who appear to be prostitutes. Under this heading can be included Ipsithilla from Poem xxxii.¹³ Catullus's use of the word *delicia* in his address to her recalls his use of the same word for a plaything of Lesbia's, the *passer* (pet bird). Lesbia, herself, is never addressed with this term. This is revealing about his attitude to Ipsithilla; she is portrayed as a plaything with whom to while away the desires of the moment. Poem xli also has a sexual context.¹⁴ In this poem, the situation presented is that Catullus has either slept with Ameana or proposed to, but is unwilling to pay the price she asks. Neudling, however, has questioned whether the poem concerning Ipsithilla is not in fact an attack on the candidate for the praetorship, P Plautius Hypsaeus, which would give this poem a political subtext.¹⁵ He argues that Plautius was prominent in public life in 56 BC, and the 'remarkable similar and unusual cognomen' leads him to consider whether Ipsithilla is a play on his name to indicate his mistress or a sister, Plautia Hypsaea. The attack centres on the implied cuckolding of Plautius or the intimation of the sexual availability of his sister, both equally effective in political invective.

Neudling also points out that the term Catullus uses for having sex, *futuere* in its various forms, was only elsewhere used to describe relations with a woman, the Ameana of poem xli, and it is possible that Ameana might not be simply a love interest either. In both

poem xli, and a second poem that mentions Ameana, poem xliii, she is described as being *amica decoctoris Formiani*, the girlfriend of the bankrupt from Formiae, a derogatory circumlocution for Mamurra, one of Caesar's most important administrators.¹⁶ This relationship between the two poems provides a clear hint that there might be more to these poems than their primary meaning might suggest. When as readers, we become aware that Ameana may be connected to Mamurra, a very different light is cast on Catullus' apparent relationship with her.¹⁷ It becomes more likely that this poem could be a deliberate attack on Mamurra, however fictional the basis of the accusations within the poem, and, moreover, one in a series of attacks.

Both sets of poems could therefore be political invective aimed at undermining the public image of these two men by highlighting their lack of control in their relationships with women, and in the case of Mamurra his lack of *continentia* in general. As Skinner remarks on the series of invectives against Mamurra: 'In attacking Caesar's *praefectus fabrum* Catullus clearly adheres to the traditions of Roman political invective, which favoured indiscriminate charges of sexual debauchery and extravagance.'¹⁸ As Wray observes; 'Surely Poems 41 and 43 are at least open to a very different interpretation, as a bit of very forehanded invective – sexual, financial and even political – directed principally at the “*decoctor* from Formiae”.'¹⁹

Aufillena is another woman subjected to Catullus' invective; in poem cx, she is pilloried for promising, but not delivering favours – presumably sexual – to Catullus and in cxi, an Aufillena is accused of having an adulterous and incestuous affair with her uncle. In Poem c, a poem of ambiguous tone, an Aufillena is connected with a Quintius *flos Veronensum*.²⁰ Assuming we are dealing with one person, it is possible that she was a moderately well-born provincial married woman, as her North Italian name and Catullus'

use of 'free-born' (xc 6: *ingenua*) suggests, amateurishly playing with the opportunities for extra-marital sex.²¹ By comparing her to a *meretrix* (low-class prostitute) Catullus implicitly raises her above this level. Quintus of Poem c is unknown, and Catullus may describe him as *flos Veronensum* ironically. As Verona was a wealthy colony, with Roman citizenship available through holding a magistracy, there might be more than meets the eye here too. It is possible that this is an attack on an ambitious young man, who may have liked to think of himself as the flower of the next generation. Catullus is using his female partner in his attack just as he uses Ameana in attacking Mamurra. While much consideration is given to the competition in Rome, we must not forget that competition, albeit on a smaller level, could be just as fierce among the local aristocrats vying for the office which was a route to Roman citizenship in as yet unenfranchised Cisalpine Gaul.

The parallel with Mamurra and Ameana is clear in the way that Catullus discusses his own sexual access to the woman, criticises her character, and mentions her other partner. As there is a definite possibility of an attack on that partner in one set of poems, it cannot be dismissed as speculation to suggest that this might be true in the case of the other set. This alternative explanation for the poems does not affect the way Catullus' portrayals of Aufillena and Ameana conform to what we know of the moral climate of Rome at the end of the Republic; they are portrayed as independent women, seeking sexual outlets and perhaps economic and material gain that either conventional marriage could not provide, or was not an option due to their low or servile birth.

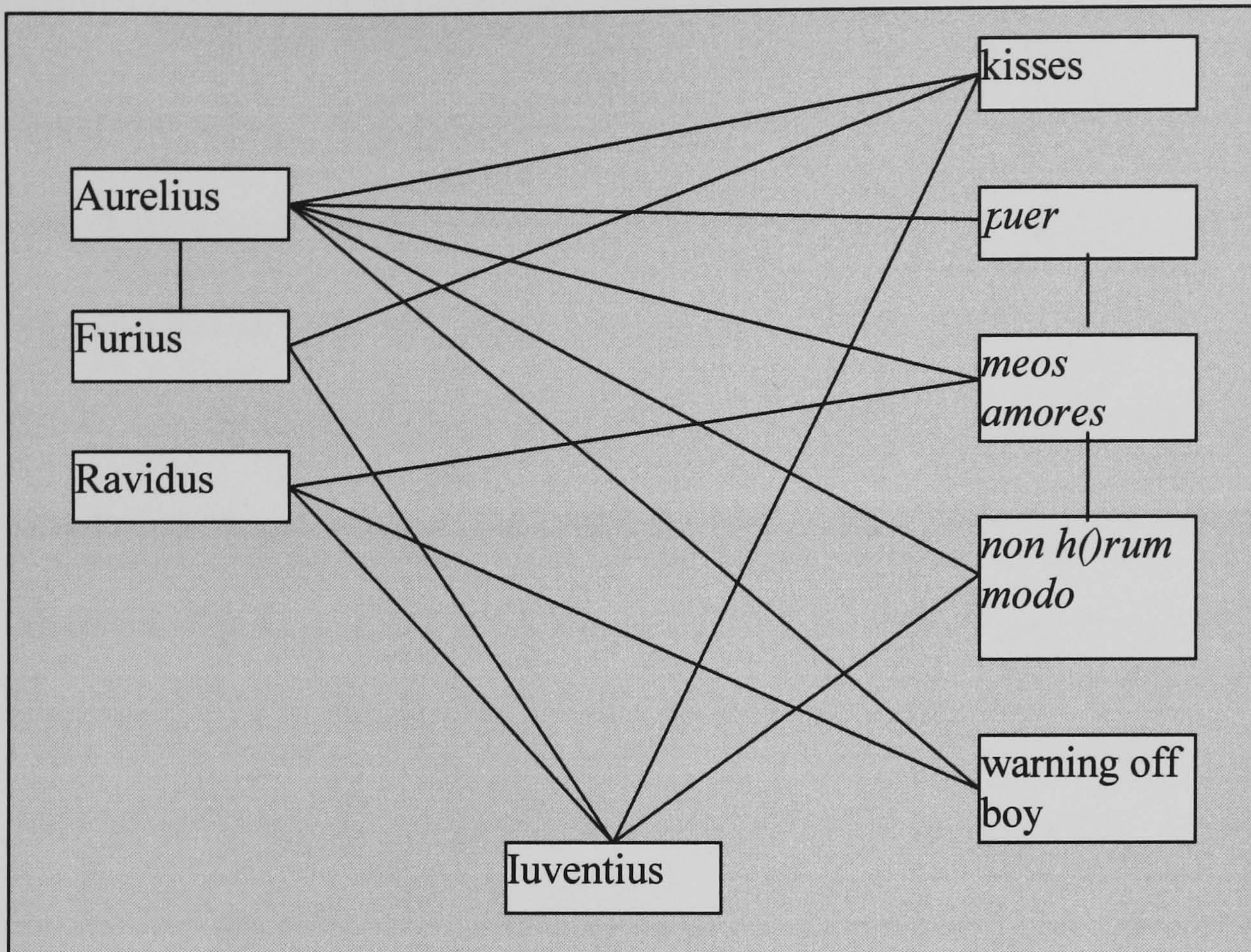
Catullus' poems to other women, therefore, do not express any real affection for them; he voices purely sexual interest, or I have suggested, uses them as a vehicle for political attack on their partners and families. The sexual aspects of the relationships are described in ways that conform to societal norms of male dominance and control, although

the women are portrayed as exercising some control over access and price. There is, however, another group of poems apart from those to Lesbia, in which affection as well as sexual appreciation is apparent, and in which standard forms of male dominance are called into question; the poems that are addressed to or involve a young man Catullus calls Juventius.

JUVENTIUS

There are at least seven poems that appear to concern a youth called Juventius. In poem xv, Catullus asks Aurelius to look after a *puer* (xv 5 ‘boy’) who he characterises as *meos amores* (xv 1 ‘my love’). In poem xxi, he castigates Aurelius for trying to gain the affections of a *puer* (xxi 11), again described as *meos amores* (xx 4). In poem xl, it is Ravidus who is warned off *meos amores* (xl 7), probably the same *puer* of poems xv and xxi. Poem xxiv asks the *flosculum Iuventiorum* (xxiv 1 ‘little flower of the Juventii’) not to favour a man who has neither a slave or a cash-box, and makes clear that Juventius is a passive partner (xxiv 6: *te sineres ab illo amari* ‘you allow yourself to be loved by him’), with the diminutive implying youth. The reference to poverty repeated from the previous poem, xxiii, identifies the man as Furius, and also provides a link with Aurelius, as he is twice associated with Furius (xi xvi).²² The strong verbal similarities between the poems suggest a link between the *meos amores* of xxi and Juventius.²³ Juventius’s questionable taste in his lovers is a topic in poem lxxxi as well, and the reference to *hospes ab sede Pisauri* may imply Ravidus.²⁴ Poems xlvi and xcix both concern kisses, the former containing similarities with the kiss poems to Lesbia. Four poems therefore directly name Juventius, and similarity of theme, language and references strongly suggest that the other verses also are about this young man. Figure 1 shows these inter-relations in a diagram.

Figure 1: Relationships between Juventius and other Men/Motifs



If Juventius was a slave, ex-slave or non-citizen, all Roman males could have a sexual relationship with him with no adverse effects on their own social standing or reputation, provided that their behaviour was moderate, for example, in the payment of gifts, and that they took the active role while Juventius took the passive role.²⁵ But what if Juventius were a young, upper class Roman? Standard accounts of Roman male sexual practice make the distinction between having a relationship with permissible passive partners, such as slaves, and those unsuited to such a role, such as male citizens, especially those of higher social rank.²⁶ In this distinction, it is argued, Roman practice differed significantly from the Greek, where such relationships formed part of the education of young citizens.²⁷ Lanata, for example, has commented on the place that single sex love held in archaic Greek society, within male and female communities and associations

‘where it constituted one of the bonds and at the same time established itself as an important pedagogic instrument.’²⁸

In the case of Juventius, there is a distinct possibility that he is from such a forbidden group. The reference to lineage in Poem xxiv seems to suggest that Juventius was from a good family, as there is no reason to argue that Catullus was being ironic in this context; the use of the word *flos* in relation to upper class youths was common practice.²⁹ Cicero mentions the Juventii as an old and distinguished family, originally from Tusculum, and the name is found on inscriptions from Verona in Imperial times.³⁰ There is no question that Catullus is using Juventius’ freeborn status to attack his lovers for impropriety, as he admits his own relationship with him. It is even possible that Ovid provides evidence for suggesting that Catullus had a relationship with a freeborn man as he speaks of Catullus making public more than one love affair, through which he confessed his ‘adultery.’³¹ Adultery in a Roman sense meant sexual relations with a forbidden partner, irrespective of their marital status. Catullus’ affair with a patrician Clodia constituted one such adulterous liaison, and his relationship with Juventius may have been another, equally barred on account of his freeborn status.

A reassessment of what was socially acceptable in Roman single sex relationships is therefore relevant to understanding the political implications of these poems and Catullus’ possible role in responding to and being involved in the contemporary definition of masculinity. There are two aspects that need to be explored; firstly, whether an active Roman male was really debarred from having a relationship with a freeborn youth, and secondly, whether a higher-ranking Roman citizen male was ever allowed to take the passive role. Within this discussion, it is important to distinguish between modern male gender definitions based on anatomy, and the ancient gender definitions which could

change, especially with age. As Gleason said: 'Masculinity in the ancient world was an achieved state, radically underdetermined by anatomical sex.'³²

Several critics comment on the offence of *stuprum*, often associated with the Lex Sca(n)tinia, a law of unknown date which appears to have been some attempt to restrict the passive role in non-marital sexual relationships to slaves and non-Romans.³³ Evidence for legislation against *stuprum* includes Quintilian who records that a man who had sexual relations with a freeborn man was fined 10 000 sesterces. A similar penalty is given for *stuprum* with a freeborn woman.³⁴ The jurist Paulus appears to deal with similar situations; he wrote: 'He who has seduced or otherwise dishonored a freeborn youth [*praetextatus*], whether he has abducted him himself, or suborned his attendant, or who has propositioned a woman or a girl, or has done anything to corrupt the morals of another, or has provided the house or money necessary for such an act, if the act is carried out shall be subject to 'capital' punishment.'³⁵

If weight is to be given to this evidence as reflecting the situation in Catullus' era, then one cannot cherry-pick details from the passage – and the punishments mentioned must also be put in context; for example, is 10 000 sesterces a serious punishment? Judging from Catullus xli, this could be presented as being a fee, albeit expensive, for a single assignation with a prostitute. It is interesting that Catullus appears himself to have transgressed with impunity all the rules given here in relation to women, and in addition implicates a friend in his 'crime'; Catullus has propositioned and corrupted Lesbia, a married woman, and was provided with the house for this purpose by his friend Allius, whom he names.

Furthermore, what this evidence makes clear is that before the law, a relationship with a freeborn youth was as unacceptable as one with a freeborn woman. As Williams

comments: 'A striking indifference to the gender of the passive partner informs nearly all of the ancient texts that allude to *stuprum*.'³⁶ In practice, we know that these rules were openly flouted in relationships with freeborn women and it seems unreasonable therefore to assume otherwise for freeborn men.³⁷ Rather, we should conclude that *stuprum* referred to behaviours considered unacceptable by traditional Romans, but which fashionable, Hellenized young Romans such as Catullus practiced at will and with impunity. It is even possible that such a display of fashionable Hellenism enhanced a Roman male's standing.

I turn now to the status of the passive partner. It is clear that Catullus himself appears to fit with the conventional thinking on masculinity in certain of his poems; thus he threatens the adults, Aurelius and Furius with forced passive roles in Poem xvi (*pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo*) to reassert his masculinity. Conversely, he uses the passive role figuratively and comically to declare how put upon he was by his governor Memmius, emphasising the power and higher status of Memmius and his own diminished state.³⁸ Thallus of Poem xxv is described as a pathic and contemptible, and Catullus emphasises his lack of masculinity by the repetition of the concept of *mollis*. In Poem lvi, the slave-boy he says he has sex with is objectified both by his sexual role and by being made the subject of a joke. Already a slave, this boy is further demeaned by Catullus' act.

In poem lxi, however, the picture is more complex. Manlius is told that he must now give up his boy concubine and other smooth-skinned boys as these relationships must end with marriage. What is interesting here is the status of the boys and the inference that newly married men did not have the sexual freedom at home often assumed.³⁹ The concubine is actually losing status as he surrenders his special position; Catullus infers that he may not be so scornful of *vilicae*, the home-grown slave-women, in future. It is perhaps the factor of the concubine's youth that complicates the situation of the passive partner; it

has reduced the stigma of the role, even giving it a special status above those performing 'male' roles, albeit in this case, within a group already submissive, slaves.⁴⁰

Walters argues for the importance of age in those of citizen status; 'males who have not attained the state of adulthood are not called *viri*: instead they are described as *pueri*, *adulescentes*, or other terms that define them as not yet fully grown.'⁴¹ Only the *vir* was considered impenetrable, and so it is possible that a young aristocrat, while having the social status and gender requisite for a *vir* as opposed to a *homo*, may by his youth be susceptible to activity otherwise relegated to slaves, ex-slaves and citizens of lower class and reputation.⁴² So Cicero puts the case that youth is 'that time of life that is suggestible of its own accord and, moreover, vulnerable to the lust of others.'⁴³ While Walters argues that such activity would be detrimental to a youth attaining the status of *vir*, the fact that politicians, including Antony, Caesar, and Q Opimius, could be accused of such activity suggests that it may have occurred among them, and not necessarily precluded the transition to *vir*.⁴⁴ Caesar's own soldiers notoriously sang of his passive role in his relationship with King Nicomedes at his triumph years after the event, clearly not expecting to damage his authority in this way.⁴⁵

Part of the answer may be given by Edwards: 'Those accused of submitting themselves to other men were often held to have done so in order to derive some advantage from a man of power and influence. As Cicero's allegations about Antony's behaviour suggest, advantage was perhaps felt to be a more reasonable justification for such behaviour than pleasure or affection (*Phil.* 2.44).'⁴⁶ This justification would fit with Catullus' appeals to Juventius to end his relationship with Furius. When Catullus mentions Juventius' ancestry, it is not to castigate his morals, as Cicero uses Clodia's forbears in the *Pro Caelio*, but to arouse his sense of pride and self-interest; his relationship with Furius

will not gain him anything as Furius is penniless. Similarly, Catullus' own figurative submission to Memmius had been in the hope of gaining some return.

Another aspect of Roman culture alien to our own also complicates the picture of dominance and submission: *patria potestas*, the authority of the head of household (*paterfamilias*). While this power had been very much reduced by the time of Catullus, as late as 108 BC a father claimed the right to execute his son.⁴⁷ For the many men who were not emancipated from paternal control (that is, not *sui iuris*) there was an assumption of dependence often far beyond their coming of age. This dependent status is not always recognised: so, for example, Cantarella comments: 'From earliest childhood, a Roman was raised to be a dominator...he had to learn from the earliest age never to submit, and to impose his will on everybody – including his sexual will.'⁴⁸ But if a boy's father was alive and felt so inclined, he could force his son to submit to his will in virtually all matters. A son, even one freed from his own father's control (*sui iuris*), was also not in control of his own marriage: his father-in-law retained the power to compel his daughter to divorce if it suited her birth family. This allowed for a curious mixture of extreme aggression and submission in Roman male adult life that might help explain why age was a factor in single-sex relationships between citizens.⁴⁹

Into this general context, we need to fit Aufillenus of poem c. He does not appear to be a slave, and yet Catullus apparently favours the love affair of Caelius and Aufillenus above the heterosexual passion of Quintius and Aufillena. If it is correct, as argued above, that Aufillena was of free birth, then it is possible that the youth of Aufillenus, her brother, the corresponding 'female', is the significant factor, allowing him to be accepted positively in his passive role, despite his free birth.⁵⁰

There is also a chance that we have not gone far enough in reassessing attitudes to male-to-male sexual acts in Catullus' time. Mosaics, drinking cups and frescos broaden the evidence given in surviving literary texts, and sometimes challenge our conclusions from these. So for example, there is a Hellenistic agate gemstone, which appears to represent adult male-to-male sex. Clarke comments that, 'The element in this representation that finds no parallel in either contemporary or later representations of male-to-male love-making is the large, erect penis of the man being penetrated.'⁵¹ The issue, as Clarke points out, is that most critics assume that, 'The "passive" partner must be the object of the phallic male's penetration and must not respond with an erection'; so, for example, Parker who argues that a *pathicus* 'derives pleasure not through his penis, but solely from being used in his mouth or his anus.'⁵² Clarke argues that this gemstone challenges this view. In his review of Clarke's more recent book which deals with the same gemstone,⁵³ Butrica argues against this interpretation on the basis that the word Akhaii on the gemstone derives from the feminine Akhaiis, suggesting heterosexual or female-to-female sex, but Clarke's interpretation seems more faithful to what is depicted. Furthermore, Butrica still acknowledges that the cup called the Warren Cup by Clarke shows clear evidence for mature male sex; 'the object is evidence for something like a "gay" male subculture.'⁵⁴

Catullus' poems lvi and lvii are relevant here; the first appears to portray Catullus having anal intercourse with a boy who has just been masturbating or performing active sex himself by penetrating a slave girl and the second refers to Caesar and Mamurra as being both pathic and active in their relationship with each other and others. Both poems contradict the notion that passive partners were exclusively passive, and never sought pleasure through an active sexual role. Elsewhere, Suetonius records that the elder Curio

attacked Caesar as ‘a man for all women and a women for all men’ and Clodius suffered similar attacks from Cicero.⁵⁵ While the particulars of these charges may be unreliable, it is clear that there could be situations where a man may be either active or passive, depending on his partner’s gender, and that such stories would be plausible to the contemporary audience.

Poem 1 which records an evening of poetry making is also relevant in this context due to the eroticized nature of its language; it speaks very much in terms of an evening of reciprocated love between two adult males. Catullus portrays himself as still sexually aroused after the evening has closed, and sends the poem to Calvus entreating him to take pity on him. The lover-poet usually employs a poem to gain access to his *puella*, which would put Catullus in an active role sexually. However, as Hallett has pointed out, the language Catullus uses to describe his physical state suggests a woman in labour: ‘By using both *labor* and *dolor* to describe his reaction to the session with Calvus...he appears to employ the metaphor of childbirth for the process of poetic composition.’⁵⁶ Catullus therefore metaphorically ascribes both female and male roles to himself and Calvus. He does this implicitly, however, and with a subtlety that would be appreciated by a sophisticated reader.

It appears therefore that while Catullus felt justified in portraying a relationship with a youth, he did not, however, go as far as to openly promote relationships with a mature passive male or one where partners exchanged roles, although his poetry gives support to the assumption that such sexual conduct occurred. I would conclude, therefore, that Catullus’ attitude to single sex relationships reflected and promoted the sophisticated Hellenized opinion of his age, that the passive role only was unsuitable for the mature, freeborn Roman citizen male, while accepting the traditionalist viewpoint that taking the

active role with either sex enhanced one's own masculinity and/or higher status. Taking the passive role denoted youth, lower status, and/or submission, but not necessary any combination of these three. For elite youths, age was a key factor, although there was still a risk that later in their careers, others could use such activity in youth as a politically defamatory charge, since it flouted traditional social conventions.

There is one more complicating factor: the acceptability of showing affection and desire for reciprocity, both of which are portrayed in the relationship with Juventius. Catullus' poems about kissing with both Lesbia and Juventius are particularly relevant, as they do not appear to fit with the standard image of dominant, penetrating male.⁵⁷ In her introduction to *Roman Sexualities*, Skinner has argued that 'Insertive and receptive modes of pleasure were...polarized...with desire for cross-sex gratifications stigmatised as "diseased" (*morbosus*).'⁵⁸ Catullus' concentration on kissing emphasises a more erotically reciprocated phase of the sexual relationship, in which shared pleasure is apparent (for example, poem v: *vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus*). In this poem, he is asking for kisses, and in poem xlviii, it is he who kisses Juventius' eyes. In poem xcix, he describes the effect of stealing a kiss from Juventius, emphasising the difference when pleasure is one-sided. While Parker may argue that kissing does not determine 'sexual personas', in the dearth of other evidence on mutual pleasure, dismissing the role of kissing in a sexual relationship leads to over-emphasis on the humiliation of the passive partner in the sexual act.⁵⁹ Furthermore, it is the kiss poems that appear to have been used by Furius and Aurelius to construe Catullus' sexuality; it is these that are sufficient to render him *mollis*, that is, unsuitably passive for an adult citizen. Catullus is able to refute their definition, however, using precisely the strong, masculine terms that they understand, the implication being that they have misunderstood sophisticated codes of behaviour. To fellow

sophisticates, Juventius' youth permits both his passive role, and Catullus' less aggressive masculinity. In this aspect, Catullus again reflects the latest fashions in sexuality.⁶⁰

Poem xvi reminds us, however, that being charged with *mollitia* was a risk poets such as Catullus ran with enemies willing to exploit the more traditional viewpoint of a less sophisticated audience, such as the general assembly. As Wray put it: 'there was no comfort zone at the center in which he [a Roman man] could be certain of being sufficiently cultivated without exposing himself to accusations of effeminacy, or of being sufficiently rough-hewn without incurring the charge of rusticity.'⁶¹ The charge of *mollitia* also extended beyond the sexual as Edwards explains: 'The relative value Romans placed on attributes they symbolically associated with men and with women has crucial implications for the significance of Roman references to sexually 'passive' behaviour and effeminacy in general in men.'⁶² It was therefore possible for a Roman man to be accused of passive behaviour (*cinaedus*) for wearing silk or perfume, irrespective of his sexual behaviour.⁶³ A Roman man therefore had to weigh up the relative advantages of Hellenistic sophistication against such risks.

To return then to other aspects of Catullus' portrayal of the affair, it is striking that Catullus referred to Juventius by his own name, especially since he disguised Clodia's real name. Apuleius pointed out that Lucilius had used actual names for slave-boys, but that this had not been right even for them.⁶⁴ Catullus' practice can be put into context, however, when we consider that he also identified Allius by name when depicting him as the procurer of a house for his affair with Lesbia. There can be no suggestion of a desire to harm reputation in either case. There is a chance, however, that Catullus may have attempted to use the tool of *infamia* to maintain his own ascendancy with Juventius. By alluding to his being involved in a series of relationships and commenting on his rival's

lack of funds, Catullus could have put Juventius at risk of being accused of being a *cinaedus*, a male prostitute.⁶⁵ Such an accusation could have political implications for a Roman citizen male as such men lost their rights to vote, act as a juror and to seek office, reducing them to the status of non-citizens, women and slaves. While a young man's social reputation might withstand one restricted passive relationship as a youth, it does seem likely that *infamia*, the loss of social standing, might result from accusations of passive male prostitution. As Edwards argues, 'Self-control and discernment regarding sensual pleasures were traditionally markers of masculinity and social refinement.'⁶⁶

I am not suggesting, however, either that Catullus intended the actual political penalty of *infamia* to take place or that he could have arranged for others to undergo political punishments if he had wanted to.⁶⁷ As with the case of adultery mentioned above, the law did not necessarily accurately reflect what was applicable to wealthy, high-status Romans. This is clear from the *lex Acilia repetundarum* of 122 BC, which excluded specifically gladiators and convicted criminals from the body of 450 equestrian jurors. While Edwards argues that this definition of the jurors shows how the legal disability of *infamia* might work in action, what is striking is that a requirement that the jurors be equestrians, the second highest rank in Roman society, did not in itself exclude such people of ill repute.⁶⁸ Catullus' power over Juventius was therefore in reality very much restricted, and he has to attack his rivals, such as Furius and Aurelius, to maintain his ascendancy.

Catullus' use of humour in sexual contexts may reflect his confidence in handling such complicated themes; he uses laughter against himself when he describes himself in a position of extremely humiliating sexual submission to Memmius. The very teasing nature of his poetry also undermines traditional active/passive roles; how do you class poems that

aim at exciting erections, but provide no outlet for relief. Are the poems still effeminate and inactive? Is the titillated reader still active?⁶⁹

Such teasing might be seen as Catullus challenging traditionalists from a confident, sophisticated, Hellenistic position and using humour in doing this. As Freud said: 'Every joke calls for a public of its own and laughing at the same jokes is evidence of far-reaching psychical conformity.'⁷⁰ Those who share Catullus' views of sexuality enjoy the exclusivity of the clique of Hellenistic sophisticates. While Catullus' relationship with Juventius conforms to the ideals of this clique, it is possible that in his relationship with Lesbia, he explores the boundaries even further.

LESBIA

The Lesbia cycle of poems differs from the rest of Catullus' poetry and previous love poetry by the extensive treatment given to his love affair and by the analysis that Catullus provides of his own passionate feelings. As with Juventius, Catullus does not name Lesbia in every poem about or to her, and it is important to justify the assumption that poems not naming Lesbia do in fact depict this relationship.⁷¹

External evidence mentions Catullus' love affairs, but Lesbia is the only woman named in connection with Catullus. For example, Ovid wrote: *Sic sua lascivo cantata est saepe Catullo/ Femina cui falsum Lesbia nomen erat* ('So it was that lustful Catullus often sang of his girl, whose made-up name was Lesbia').⁷² Within the corpus, we have thirteen poems that mention Lesbia by name. There are then eleven poems with various addressees, including *puella*, *mea puella*, *mea vita*, *mulier*, and poem lviii b which uses *lux mea*, *candida diva*, and *domina*. These are listed in table 1 below. Strong verbal similarities and repetition of key motifs and themes allow us to include many of these poems within the

Lesbia cycle and these links are summarized in table 2 below, where poems that name Lesbia are marked in bold and poems which contain clear and/or multiple cross references are marked by italics. It then seems reasonable to suggest that if, for example, several of the poems addressed to *mea puella* can be seen to be clearly connected with Lesbia, then we may consider the possibility that other poems in that group also refer to Lesbia. The motifs and verbal similarities summarised in the tables are discussed in more detail below.

Table 1: Cross references in describing his female love, shown by addressee.

<i>(mea) puella</i>	<i>Lesbia</i>	<i>lux mea</i>	<i>candida diva</i>	<i>domina</i>	<i>mea vita</i>	<i>mulier</i>
ii	v	<i>lxviiib</i>	<i>lxviiib</i>	<i>lxviiib</i>	civ	<i>lxx</i>
iii	vii				<i>cix</i>	
<i>viii</i>	xliii				<i>(lxviiib)</i>	
<i>xi</i>	li					
xiii	lviii					
xxxvi	lxxii					
<i>xxxvii</i>	lxxv					
	lxxix					
	lxxxiii					
	lxxxvi					
	lxxxvii					
	xcii					
	cvii					

Table 2: Cross references in addressing and describing his love, shown by verbal and thematic similarities.

Word/Theme	Poem
<i>vesanus</i>	vii , lxxvi, c
<i>culpa</i>	xi, lxxv
<i>foedus/fides</i>	lxxvi, lxxxvii , cix
<i>amata... quantum</i>	viii, xxxvii, lviii , lxxxvii
sparrow	ii iii
kisses	v , vii
asymmetrical relationship	ii, vii, <i>viii</i> , xi, li, <i>lxviii</i> b, lxxvi, (lxxxvii), cvii
fleeing embrace	<i>viii</i> , xxxvii
love more than self	lviii , <i>lxviii</i> b
love more than eyes	lxxxii, civ
not preferring Juppiter	<i>lxx</i> , lxxii
many lovers	xi, xxxvii, lviii , <i>lxviii</i> b
adultery	v , <i>lxviii</i> b, lxxxiii
love/hate	lxxii , lxxv , lxxvi, lxxxv
rude to his love	xxxvi, lxxix, lxxxiii, xcii, cii
able to swear truly	<i>lxx</i> , cix
Venuses/Cupids	iii, xiii, xxxvi, <i>lxviii</i> b

From these tables, it can be seen that Catullus' first two poems (poems ii and iii) about his love do not mention her by name. She is *mea puella* and the two poems form a pair by the connecting theme of the sparrow. The next two love poems (poems v and vii) both name Lesbia and form a pair by the connecting theme of how many kisses Catullus wants.

There are a number of poems that refer to his relationship in a positive way. Poem xiii mentions a special perfume *mea puella* has given to Catullus.⁷³ Two poems deal with other women's attractions as compared to Lesbia's. In poem xliii, Ameana is portrayed as less attractive, and in poem lxxxvi Quintia is acknowledged to have some beauty, but lacks the charm (*venustas*) and wit (*mica salis*) that Catullus feels is a necessary corollary of true beauty. Lesbia, on the other hand, has these qualities in abundance.⁷⁴ Lesbia is therefore

characterised as having the wit and learning necessary to appreciate the finer points of Catullus' poems to her, for example the allusions in poem vii.⁷⁵

A key theme, however, connecting a number of poems is the portrayal of an unequal emotional investment in the relationship. Poem li shows Catullus in emotional turmoil at just the sight of Lesbia, while she is apparently unaware of him.⁷⁶ In poem lxxxvii, Catullus only mentions his love for her, and his sense of fidelity. Hints of emotional asymmetry are apparent in poem ii, where Catullus is unable to assuage his passion in the way his *puella* can – he suffers more from 'sad anxieties' (ii 10 *tristis curas*) – and in poem vii, where Lesbia is possibly growing less compliant to Catullus' demands, while he has become or remains madly in love (vii 10 *vesanus*). This asymmetry is much clearer in poems viii and cvii, where the *puella* is clearly the controlling partner in the relationship; in poem viii, she (no longer *mea*), is no longer willing to permit what she allowed before and in poem cvii, it is she who decides to return, completely unexpectedly. Poem xi again represents a low point in the relationship with *mea puella*, and is Catullus' repudiation message, possibly in response to the break-up depicted in viii. Although Catullus initially appears to take the initiative, it is apparent that she has already moved on.

Very striking in this poem is the use of the metaphor of the plough and the flower; the *puella* is compared to a plough, the male image, which reflects her dominance in the relationship.⁷⁷ In this poem, Catullus also appears to be questioning traditional active/passive sexual roles: at the same time as labelling her as nymphomaniac whore, he gives the sexual power and the initiative, however destructive, to Lesbia rather than to her lovers.⁷⁸ Despite the excessiveness of her sex-drive, she remains in control, using her lovers and emasculating them. She holds them (*tenet*), does not love them (*nullam amans vere*), and ruptures them (*ilia rumpens*); her active role is expressed by the active verbs.

Poem lxviii b depicts positive moments in the relationship. Yet, surprisingly, perhaps, it describes their love as ‘shared’ (v 69 *communes*), and although Catullus is said to be preferred, he is only one of a number of lovers of this married woman.⁷⁹ While it was acceptable for a husband to have other sexual relations with those of permitted categories, for example slave women or boys, such freedom was not conventionally extended to his wife. Catullus, however, responds to her lack of commitment with complete infatuation; she is everything to him.⁸⁰ The presence of Cupid signifies Catullus’ apparent positive approach to this situation (v 133), although the reader is aware of the bad omen of the squeaking slipper on the threshold.⁸¹ The married status of the woman Catullus describes as *candida diva*, *domina* and *lux mea* (lxviii b 70; 67; 132) is consistent with his relationship with Lesbia, whom he describes as verbally abusing him in front of her husband in poem lxxxiii.⁸² Reminiscent of such determined self-deception is the character Jay Gatsby in Scott Fitzgerald’s novel *The Great Gatsby*; he refuses to acknowledge the changes marriage and having a child have made to the life of his ‘goddess’, Daisy. For a while Daisy, like Lesbia, is prepared to go along with Gatsby’s dream, but eventually her real character breaks down Gatsby’s illusion, with tragic consequences, although Daisy herself moves on relatively unscathed.

It is worth reflecting just how shocking accepting such a one-sided relationship with a woman was for a Roman man. Furthermore, not content with this outrage, Catullus compounds his unconventional situation by his highly-striking identification with the conventional female role; already mentioned is his use of the flower-virgin metaphor and his commitment to one woman. In poem li, he imitates a poem written by a woman, applying her descriptions of female erotic distress to his own. Other examples include his identification with Atalanta in fragment iib and with both Juno and Laodamia in lxviii b.

Khan explains this use of female comparators in terms of Catullus' unusual commitment to his relationship with Lesbia: 'It is important to realise that it was because Catullus preferred fidelity, the typical virtue of the Roman *matrona*, to infidelity, the typical stance of a Roman man in his circumstances, that he more easily found parallels for his own love experience in female rather than male figures.'⁸³ Accordingly, Miller suggests that Catullus identifies himself with Ariadne, abandoned by Theseus who represents Lesbia.⁸⁴ Catullus's love affair is also reflected in his portrayal of the feminized Attis/Galla through the similarity of their progress from devotion through a process of castration or effeminization, isolation, abandonment and ultimately self-destruction. As Attis becomes Cybele's unwilling bondsman, Catullus is also unable to release himself from his goddess, Lesbia.⁸⁵

Conversely, Lesbia's masculine power is emphatically displayed by Catullus' descriptions of her vows to him concerning Jupiter; in poem lxx, Jupiter is to be rejected by Catullus' 'woman' (*mulier mea*) if he seeks her in marriage (lxx 2: *non si Iuppiter ipse petat*) and in poem lxxii, Lesbia has declared that she prefers Catullus to the embraces of Jupiter (v 2: *nec prae me velle tenere Iovem*).⁸⁶ The two poems are therefore closely connected verbally and thematically. With Lesbia, Catullus infers, even Jupiter, the habitual ravager of beautiful women, loses the power to take the initiative.

The emotional imbalance in the relationship relates to three associated themes: the uniqueness of his love for her; the transformation of this special love through her fault (*culpa*) into a contradictory combination of sexual desire and loathing; and her progressive fall from grace, from goddess to cross-roads prostitute. These themes further establish connections between the *puella* and Lesbia.

Starting with his descriptions of his love, in poem viii, (concerning a *puella*), he comments on the unique nature of the depth of his love: *amata nobis quantum amabitur nulla* ('a girl loved by us as much as no other will be loved'), and repeats this sentiment almost word for word in poem xxxvii (also concerning a *puella*): *amata tantum quantum amabitur nulla* ('loved by me so much as no other will be loved'). There are also strong verbal similarities with the beginning of poem lxxxvii, which mentions Lesbia by name: *nulla potest mulier tantum se dicere amatam / vere quantum a me Lesbia amata mea est* ('No woman can truly say she has been loved as much as my Lesbia has been loved by me').

In an attempt to describe the nature of his love, he also uses the notions of loving more than self and kin. So, in lxviii he describes the unnamed lady as dearer to Catullus than his own self: *et longe ante omnes mihi quae me carior ipso est* ('and she beyond all, far dearer to me than my own self'). In lviii, it is Lesbia who is loved more than himself and his kin: *plus quam se atque suos amavit omnes* ('loved more than self and all his kin').

In poems lxxxii and civ, he uses a variant to this theme, 'more than [his] own eyes'. Struggling to find Roman concepts to portray his emotion accurately, he also uses the language of trust (*fides*) and treaty (*foedus*), in relation to his love for Lesbia as for example, in poem lxxxvii: *nulla fides ullo fuit umquam in foedere tanta / quanta in amore tuo ex parte reperta mea est* ('no faith so great was ever found in any contract / as on my part in love for you'). It is likely that this pact of love to her is alluded to in poem lxxvi⁸⁷ and it is picked up even more directly in poem cix, (cix 6: *aeternum hoc sanctae foedus amicitiae*), suggesting a link between Lesbia and the *mea vita* of cix. *Mea vita* is only used once elsewhere, in poem civ, mentioned above for the 'loved more than eyes' motif.

It is possible, therefore, that Catullus used several interlinking terms of address, connecting these poems. In lxviii Catullus uses the term, *mea lux*, ‘my light’, who is dearer than life, (cf Lesbia in lviii) and the motif of who makes living sweet, (v 160 *viva vivere dulce*),). In poem civ, she is *meae vitae*, and dearer than both eyes. Calling her ‘my life’ is a natural progression from the motif in poem lxviii, that of being everything in life to him, and eyes are also closely connected to light, *lux*.⁸⁸ The two poems can be seen, therefore, to use very similar motifs. In addition, both can be connected to Lesbia poems through other motifs, for example, cix to lxxxvii by the treaty motif. Living/life and love are also closely connected in the first line of poem v (*Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus* ‘Let us live, my Lesbia and love’).

In poem lxxii, mentioned above with poem lxx in relation to Lesbia’s avowed rejection of even Juppiter, it is clear that Catullus has growing misgivings over her fidelity and sincerity. He continues in this poem to analyse his current feelings for her, which have become an unhappy mixture of increasing disgust and sexual desire. Due to her hurting him (lxxii 7: *iniuria*), he ‘loves’ her more, but has less ‘affection’ (lxxii 8: *amare magis sed bene velle minus*). Poem xcii is also relevant to this idea of conflicting feelings, although it has a very different tone; he speaks of verbally abusing her, while loving her at the same time. Some self-deception (conscious?) or irony may be apparent here, as he then interprets her continual abuse of him as part of her love for him.

Poem lxxv portrays a development in this theme; things have reached a point where Lesbia’s actions have irrevocably destroyed all his affection (*bene velle*) for her, while he is utterly incapable of eradicating his desire (*amare*) for her. The jaunty tone, with undertones of self-deception, apparent in poem xcii is here transformed into explicit self-loathing. Poem lxxxv, beginning *odi et amo* (‘I hate and I love’), encapsulates his

emotions.⁸⁹ His girlfriend's responsibility for destroying his love (lxxv 1 *tua...culpa*) is also a theme in poem xi; it is clear from his message, (the *non bona dicta*) that he has lost his affection for *mea puella*. Poem lxxvi expresses his desperation to be rid of his desire for her; he criticises her ungratefulness, reflects on his own fidelity, and talks of love in terms of torture, wretchedness and deadly disease.⁹⁰ Verbal similarities also connect lxxvi with li; as Commager comments: 'The repetition of *miser, aspicio, eripio, torpor* and *sub artus* [in li 5-10 and lxxvi 19-22] guarantees that the reminiscence is deliberate.'⁹¹

Hatred of Lesbia/*mea puella* frequently takes the form of denigrating her character through hyperbolic descriptions of her love life. In xi, *mea puella* is described as having three hundred adulterous lovers and being sexually insatiable. In poem xxxvii, his *puella* is associated with a brothel/bar and accused of admitting sexual relations with a broad spectrum of men, including the good and great of Rome but also low-life adulterers (xxxvii 16 *pusilli et semitarii moechi*), whose numbers again run into the hundreds (xxxvii 7 *centum an ducenti*). In poem lviii, naming Lesbia, he describes her in terms of the lowest form of prostitute (working the crossroads and back-alleys) with 'the grandsons of Remus' (lviii 5 *Remi nepotes*) as her clients, a derogatory term implying a broad spectrum of society. As discussed in chapter 2, the poem literally hisses with disgust through Catullus' use of sound effects. Poem lxxix hints at Lesbia's incest with her brother, Lesbius, the one sexual relationship that was beyond the pale for Catullus.

It is difficult to judge Catullus' intentions in writing apparent invective against Lesbia. As he says in poem xcii they are both in the habit of verbally abusing each another, yet he knows he loves her, and appears to assume from this fact that she must love him. In poem civ, he seems to imply that 'you [unknown addressee] and Tappo' (*tu cum Tappone*) have misjudged the real nature of his apparent abuse, just as he presents Furius and

Aurelius as misjudging his virility in poem xvi.⁹² Poem xxxvi may give some clues to how their reciprocal ‘abuse’ might work. In this poem, it appears that Lesbia has promised to make an offering of bad verses, with the joke being that she means Catullus’ own poems. We might interpret Catullus’ response as ‘hypermasculine, aggressive mastery,’⁹³ but I should like to suggest that it is an example of lighthearted, sophisticated banter between two friends. Poem xiv, also concerning a joke against Catullus, this time by his best friend Calvus, provides a useful comparison; both poems use contemporary, poor-quality writing as a central theme. While Suffenus, Caesius and Aquinus are the *pessimi poetae* (‘ghastly poets’) of xiv, it is Volusius’ annals that are the *cacata charta* (‘shite works’) of the *pessimus poeta* of xxxvi. Both poems therefore speak of ‘*pessimi poetae*’ and jokes against Catullus concerning bad literature. Catullus’ reaction is mock ‘Vatinian hatred’ to his friend, addressed as *salse* (‘clever dick’ in Lee’s translation), while Lesbia is *pessima puella* (‘ghastly girl’) for thinking her vow a witty joke. Further there are erotic overtones to these literary games, just as with other poems written to Catullus’ great friend Licinius Calvus.

This is not to deny that there is a progression in the portrayal of Catullus’ feelings from complete infatuation to disillusion coupled with growing hatred of the love he cannot free himself from. It appears that the poems against Lesbia progress from lively, but not malevolent abuse to abuse more akin to politically inspired invective, designed to destroy character and reputation. As Scott observes: ‘The pages of Catullus are filled with characters who in various ways are deluded.... Of course the most blatant of hypocrites is Lesbia. Apparently Catullus thought that Lesbia was another sensitive being with refined taste.... It was evident that he was totally blinded to the hardness of this scheming woman...she turned out to be, in all senses of the words, the complete political animal.’⁹⁴

The identity of Lesbia becomes more significant on a political level because of this development of the abuse into something akin to political invective; I shall return to this point later in this chapter.

The invective may also be aimed at redressing the balance of male/female power; her dominance in the affair had far deeper consequences for Catullus than the fairly conventional unreliability and coquetry of his boy-lover, Juventius and his exploration of his 'female' role had the potential to be more damaging to his status as a 'vir'. His use of the metaphor of disease for his love may reflect his adopting a more traditional view about the suitable role of love in a Roman man's life. There is a suggestion, however, that he again explored these themes in the longer poems, and in a more subtle way. As Miller stated; 'the topics of death, mutilation, castration and gender inversion, as well as marriage, are able to be developed at a length and depth which otherwise would have been difficult in the ideologically conservative world of the late Roman Republic.'⁹⁵

The interlinking of themes, motifs and verbal similarities between poems which do name Lesbia and those which do not are such, therefore, as to leave little doubt that what we have is a description of a relationship with one woman, and that this woman was called Lesbia by Catullus. In discussing the implications of this relationship further, a key issue is the rank and possible identity of this woman.

IDENTIFYING LESBIA

'It is a fact that he loved a certain Clodia and wrote unforgettable poems about her under the name Lesbia.'⁹⁶ Veyne's paraphrase of Apuleius is not an unreasonable statement of the evidence. We can, however, get a little further in determining which Clodia she was. Poem lxxix provides good grounds for restricting the choice to the daughters of Appius

Claudius Pulcher, the consul of 79; it is addressed to a Lesbius, and on the analogy that Lesbia conceals the name Clodia, this alias should conceal the name Clodius. Furthermore, this Lesbius is described as *pulcher* and accused of incest. We know that in his attacks on Publius Clodius Pulcher, the youngest son of Appius, Cicero also punned on *pulcher*, its diminutive *pulchellus* and the cognomen Pulcher⁹⁷ as well as charging him with incest.⁹⁸ It seems fairly clear, therefore, that this Lesbius is the man described by Quinn as ‘one of the most spectacular political figures of the time, the aristocrat turned demagogue, Publius Clodius Pulcher.’⁹⁹

There are various reconstructions of the family of Appius Claudius Pulcher (*pater*) and his unknown wife or wives.¹⁰⁰ We know of three brothers and three sisters; Appius, Gaius and Publius were the three sons, all of whom attained office, which provides some indication of their birth dates and relative ages.¹⁰¹ Appius was praetor in 57, consul in 54 BC, Gaius was praetor in 56, and Publius stood for the praetorship of 52, having held the tribunate in 58. Publius’ praetorship would suggest a birthdate of 92, although Cicero says that for him, the praetorship of 53 would have been *suo anno*, giving 93 as a possibility.¹⁰² If the other two brothers held the praetorship *suis annis*, this would give 95 and 94 respectively as the latest possible dates for their births, as they would have been entitled as patricians to stand two years in advance, although 97 and 96 are a possibility.¹⁰³ The only other details concerning relative age that we know is that Clodia Metelli was older than her brother Publius¹⁰⁴ and Clodia Luculli was the youngest sister.¹⁰⁵ It is therefore more likely that at least one of the sisters was born before the first two boys, but it is not possible to be certain of this.¹⁰⁶ Two possible scenarios are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Birthdates for the Claudii

Date	Children Born – Scenario 1	Date	Children Born – Scenario 2
97 or earlier to 96 ¹⁰⁷	2x Clodia, one of whom is Clodia Metelli	97	Appius
		96	Gaius
95	Appius	95	2x Clodia, one of whom is Clodia Metelli
94	Gaius	94	
93/2	Publius	93/2	Publius
91-87 ¹⁰⁸	Clodia Luculli	91-87	Clodia Luculli

The three sisters are usually known by reference to their husbands, all of whom held consular rank: Clodia Marci (also called Tertia), Clodia Metelli and Clodia Luculli.¹⁰⁹ The marriage of the youngest daughter, Clodia Luculli, appears, however, to have been to the oldest husband and was the first to break up; she was married to Lucullus soon after 76 BC, and was divorced in 66 due to her scandalous behaviour while he was away fighting Mithridates.¹¹⁰ Q Marcius Rex was consul in 68, and died in or by the summer of 61,¹¹¹ while Q Metellus Celer achieved the consulship only to die the next year, in 59. Their husbands provide no clues therefore to the relative ages of the two older sisters.

The evidence of Plutarch already referred to makes no distinction between the three women when it refers to their supposed incest with their brother Clodius: ‘Lucullus actually produced female slaves who testified that Clodius had had sexual relations with his youngest sister at the time when she was living with Lucullus as his wife. It was generally believed that Clodius had had intercourse with his other two sisters – Tertia, the wife of Marcius Rex, and Clodia, the wife of Metellus Celer.’¹¹² Plutarch does continue to say, however, referring to Clodia Metelli: ‘It was with regard to this sister in particular that Clodius got a bad name.’

It is clear therefore that there were three sisters, but we know only that the wife of Lucullus was the youngest. How then do we interpret the words of the eldest son, Appius, concerning his position at this father’s death in 76BC? Varro records these: ‘I was left in

poverty with two brothers and two sisters. I gave one of my sisters to Lucullus without a dowry.’¹¹³ Generally, this is interpreted as meaning that one of the sisters was already married and thus not mentioned as a financial dependent of the new *paterfamilias*, Appius.¹¹⁴ This may be so especially if, as a patrician woman, she had married through the process of *confarreatio*.¹¹⁵ Even so, it does seem strange for Appius to speak of only having two sisters as a result, and, moreover, it would have been unusual for him to marry the youngest before the middle sister, especially if she was several years older as suggested above.¹¹⁶ An alternative is that Appius here refers to his three sisters; two dependent on him, and the third not so, as about to be married to Lucullus.¹¹⁷ This would be more plausible, stressing the point of the poverty, which was a persistent issue for Appius not just a crisis caused by his father’s death. The point for his audience is the number of financially dependent siblings, not the number of siblings, which was presumably known already.

The question would then arise as to why the youngest was married first. In 76, this Clodia would have been anything from 11 to 15, and so at the perfect age for a first marriage. Lucullus was standing for the consulship (for 74), and it seems reasonable that he saw benefits from such an alliance at such a time to outweigh the lack of dowry. And the other sisters? It is possible that earlier marriages had ended or been broken off due to death or changes in alliances, and the two women, possibly in their twenties, had returned to the family home for further marital duty.¹¹⁸ This is in line with what we know of the age of Clodia Luculli’s husband; Lucullus would have been at least forty in 76, as the minimum age for consuls was forty-two. Not many men survived long enough to stand for a second consulship, after the compulsory gap of ten years. We would then know the elder sisters by their subsequent marriages contracted with men who would achieve their

consulships in the sixties.¹¹⁹ If these marriages ended with the deaths of the husbands in 61 and 59, they could then have been in their late thirties or even early forties, which could account for their not marrying again if they were sufficiently independent financially and intellectually.¹²⁰ We would then have all marriages entered into in due time and order.

There is also a suggestion that Appius the father married more than once, and that the six children so far discussed might not all be full siblings. I mentioned earlier that we do not know whom Appius (*pater*) married, but there is some evidence to challenge the traditional view that a Caecilia Metella was his wife and mother to all his children. Cicero mentions two familial relationships which can be interpreted in several ways. In one letter, he writes of Pompey's wife Mucia as *soror* to Metellus Celer and Nepos.¹²¹ Elsewhere, he calls Metellus Nepos and Metellus Celer *fratres* to Appius and P Clodius.¹²² Shackleton Bailey has expanded on Wiseman's earlier discussion of these terms, and explains that *soror* and *frater*, in addition to their meaning as sister and brother, can mean cousins, but only *fratres patrueles*, children of brothers.¹²³ As the Metelli cannot therefore be cousins, that is, the sons of a Claudius, brother to Appius (*pater*), then it appears that they must be half-brothers through the same mother; the mother of the Metelli would therefore at some point have been married to Appius (*pater*). She would also be married to a Mucius, thus having a daughter Mucia, sister to her sons, the Metelli.

As Clodia married Metellus Celer, she would have to have been the daughter of a different mother, as Metellus would otherwise be her half-brother. She would therefore be half-sister to Appius, Gaius and Publius, and no blood-relation to her husband. Shackleton Bailey also suggests that Clodia's mother may have been married to Appius first, making her the eldest daughter. While clearly a compelling argument which shows decisively that Caecilia Metella cannot be the wife of Appius, there is no evidence, however, either for

making Clodia older than all her brothers rather than Publius alone or for an earlier marriage. It is worth mentioning, therefore, Hillard's reconstruction, although this involves the adoption of a patrician into a plebian family which is an unlikely scenario; he suggests that the brother of Appius (*pater*) was adopted into the family of the Metelli.¹²⁴ Celer and Nepos would then be the sons of this man, making them fraternal cousins to all the Claudii. Clodia, full sibling to her brothers, would then marry her cousin. Either reconstruction is possible; the one requires the hypotheses of two marriages so that Clodia does not marry a blood half-brother, the other an adoption.

I return finally to reconstructing the context of Catullus' affair with Lesbia as far as the details can be ascertained. Catullus' Lesbia would have been married when the affair started; of the known marriages by the sisters of Clodius Pulcher, Clodia's to Metellus would have lasted the longest, until his death in 59. It is possible that Clodia was looking beyond her current marriage to Metellus to other likely husbands; Cicero's wife Terentia is recorded as being behind Cicero's decision to give evidence against Clodius at the *Bona Dea* trial. Although Clodia was married to Metellus at the time, Terentia suspected her of wanting to marry Cicero.¹²⁵ Also we hear that in 60 BC, she and Metellus had an argument over the use of some seats in the theatre.¹²⁶ Lesbia is accused of incest with her brother, and all three sisters were accused of similar conduct, although, as noted above, Plutarch says in the same section that it was Clodia Metelli who was particularly associated with her brother's ill repute, and the argument with theatre seats involved Clodius as well. Lesbia is mentioned as being considered beautiful by the province of Cisalpine Gaul (Poem xliii), and Clodia Metelli may well have visited her husband while he was governor in Cisalpine Gaul in 62.¹²⁷ This would have provided an opportunity for Catullus to meet her socially as his family was pre-eminent in Cisalpine Gaul. Clodia Metelli was also renowned for her

good looks, especially the brilliancy of her eyes.¹²⁸ It is also possible, if Clodia did not go north, that her husband's presence in Verona and possible guest-friendship with Catullus' family there would have provided an entrée to her house at Rome.

Catullus' Lesbia is never portrayed as committing to him alone, and Catullus speaks of rival lovers in the poems, including a Caelius and Rufus.¹²⁹ According to Cicero, Clodia had an affair with M Caelius Rufus, a young man making a name for himself in political circles, which started sometime in 59 and had ended by the time of the court case in 56. It is not possible to identify positively the Caelius and Rufus of the poems with Caelius Rufus, but a reasonable case can be made. Firstly the Caelius of poem c probably needs to be discounted; as Catullus makes clear, this is a Caelius from his home town, Verona, in love with Aufillenus, and who was a staunch friend during Catullus' love affair.¹³⁰ Caelius of poem lviii is a friend, but also a past lover of Lesbia (*nostra Lesbia*). This could conceivably have been written some time after the Caelius trial, when Catullus may have forgiven his rival, especially if we consider that Cicero may have reversed the truth of who rejected whom. We then have poem lxxi, about a rival of Catullus', who sleeps with their 'shared love' (*aemulus iste tuus qui vestrum exercet amorem*). This man is clearly the Rufus of lxix, by the repetition of the accusation of bad body odour. This might also be the Rufus of poem lxxvii, who had stolen something of utmost value to Catullus (*omnia nostra bona*), which could well refer to Lesbia.¹³¹ We have therefore two Caelii, one of whom may be identified with one if not both of the Rufi.

While such abuse seems ill fitted to an urbane man like Caelius Rufus, the courts were awash with witty attacks and jibes ridiculing personal defects; Caelius was not slow with these himself. The success of an insult depended not so much on truth as on its wittiness and effect on the victim. If Caelius were sensitive on this subject, it would be

ideal for Catullus to pick away at. It is also worth noting that the insult of a stinking goat is repeated in poem xxxvii, this time against Catullus; it was an insult therefore that could be bandied between rival sets of young, urbane men, without any necessity for accuracy.

Furthermore, Catullus does not worry about being consistent; in lxix, Caelius' smell frightens away all the girls, but in lxxiv, it punishes the girl he sleeps with.

The accusation of gout also needs explaining. Wiseman takes it literally, and argues that it cannot refer to Caelius Rufus as he was a good dancer, and therefore not suffering from gout.¹³² Apart from the fact that Romans may not have moved their feet much in dancing, the nature of gout makes it unlikely that Rufus was in fact suffering from this; typically, people only have a few attacks of gout, sometimes only one, with attacks peaking within twenty-four to thirty-six hours. If Rufus was suffering an attack, it is extremely unlikely he would be able to bear the weight of bedclothes on his foot, let alone get up to anything with Catullus' girlfriend. If he was not suffering from gout, how do we explain the reference made by Catullus? It might be simply an absurd play on his name; redfaced port drinkers are the stereotype today for sufferers of gout; Rufus means 'ruddy' and 'redfaced'. The image thus produced is amusing; it need not be anything more.

Austin has also argued that the term *bestia* (lxix 8) might be an oblique reference to Caelius' prosecution of L Sempronius Bestia, the father of Atratinus (the young prosecutor of Caelius).¹³³ Dane supports this argument: 'surely any association of a Rufus with a Bestia could hardly mean anyone other than Caelius.'¹³⁴ It is very likely, therefore, that Catullus and Caelius knew each other, and it is a strong possibility that Caelius may figure in some of the poems, especially as Catullus frequently refers to leading figures of his day.

We do not know when Catullus' relationship with Lesbia began, but poem xi, breaking off relations, cannot be dated to earlier than 55/4. Clodia Metelli was at least thirty-five in 59,

but as we know this was when she began her relationship with Caelius Rufus, and he was around the same age as Catullus, if not younger, her age is not an obstacle to identifying her with Lesbia.

Wiseman is right to point out that we must avoid being influenced by the availability of evidence; he argues that if we had the speech of L Lentulus against Clodius from 61 BC rather than Cicero's *Pro Caelio*, we would be arguing the case for Clodia Luculli rather than Clodia Metelli.¹³⁵ It can be seen, however, that there is more evidence, albeit often circumstantial, to identify Catullus' Lesbia with Clodia Metelli. When we compare the woman depicted in this speech with the figure that emerges from Catullus, the case for identifying her with Lesbia is strengthened.¹³⁶ Even if we think both portrayals are largely fictive constructs of a woman rather than an accurate portrayal of the woman herself, the similarities in their treatment remains significant, suggesting one underlying model for both.

Clodia is portrayed by Cicero as beautiful and accomplished, but his admiration of her beauty is undercut by implications of incest in the epithet he chooses to use to describe her brilliant eyes: namely, βοῶπις ('ox-eyed'), the Homeric epithet for Juno, who was married to her brother.¹³⁷ In poem lxix, Catullus speaks of his girlfriend as preferring her relationship with him over a proposal of marriage from Juppiter. Catullus also undercuts his own positive images of her with hints that all may not be right; in poem vii there is a hint of her impatience with his insatiable desire for kisses. Whereas in poem v, the verb and pronouns are first person (*vivamus, nobis*), in poem vii, the first word is second person (*quaeris*) and it is Catullus alone who is described as in a frenzy of love (*vesano... Catullo*). In poem lxviii b, at the joyous moment of her arrival, he mentions her sandal squeaking on the threshold, a highly inauspicious omen.

Cicero's Clodia is *nota*, meaning well known, but carrying possible connotations of infamy and notoriety depending on tone and context.¹³⁸ Propertius commented that through Catullus' poems, Lesbia was 'more well known' (*notior*) than Helen.¹³⁹ Cicero also attacks Clodia's character by calling her a *poetria*.¹⁴⁰ Whatever he means by this term, whether a writer or appreciator of poetry or other forms of performative art, it is an attack as it was not an activity suited to a woman from the Roman nobility. It would be in keeping, however, with the Lesbia of Catullus, as she was expected to understand his poems and appreciate his sophisticated wit and learned, erudite allusions. In poem xxxvi, for example, Catullus outdoes Lesbia's joke by wordplay and playful echoing of Theocritus; he associates Lesbia, a woman attempting an aesthetic judgment of poetry, with two women attempting to discuss the merits of tapestries in specialized language, but whose pretensions and rusticity are revealed by their unrefined accents.¹⁴¹ It would also be highly appropriate; another woman addressed as *poetria* was Sappho, whom Catullus imitates very closely in two poems concerning Lesbia (xi and li).

The Clodia of the *pro Caelio* is reduced to the status of a prostitute (*meretrix*),¹⁴² taking on numerous lovers, including younger men. She flaunts her activities in the open rather than keeping them hidden inside her own home. Similarly, the Lesbia of Catullus' poetry ends up taking on numerous lovers and in salacious places, including alleyways.¹⁴³ Cicero's Clodia is larger than life, and as Rankin points out, his representation is a 'personal attack on her, which reveals a fascination with her personality, as well as satirical distaste for her proceedings.'¹⁴⁴ She is a Medea,¹⁴⁵ a Clytaemnestra.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, the Lesbia of Catullus' poetry was a goddess, benign at first, (lxviii 70 *candida diva*) with gifts of perfume from the gods themselves (xiii 12). Later, she becomes utterly destructive; in poem xi, Lesbia does not just have sex with three-hundred at once, but actively

emasculates her lovers. Her sexual power is portrayed as super-human, especially as she, a woman, has managed to reverse her passivity in the sexual act. Rankin also compares the fate of Attis, driven mad and destroyed by religious frenzy for Cybele in poem lxiii to that of Catullus, driven mad and destroyed by his passion for Clodia. Attis, on waking, bitterly regrets what he has done, but can be put back into a frenzy at will by Cybele.

Cicero was not the first to attack Clodia Metelli; she had been the victim of several jokes and slanders that he alludes to, and with which she had obviously coped, as she was prepared to court publicity again with the legal proceedings against Caelius.¹⁴⁷ The explanation behind several of these jibes is lost, but the clear implication of such jibes as *quadrantaria Clytemnestra* is an accusation of sexual availability and cheapness. Lesbia has been subjected to *flagitatio* by Catullus' abusive verse and was accused in similar terms; Catullus speaks of jokes he has played on Lesbia (poem xxxvi dedicating the poems of the 'worst poet') and of abusive verses he has sent her (poem xxxvi 5: *truces...iambos*). He alludes moreover to Lesbia being able to deal with the rough and tumble of verbal abuse; she abuses Catullus in front of her husband,¹⁴⁸ she is the plough to his flower¹⁴⁹ and is probably the ugly adulteress/virtuous lady of poem xlii. Such abuse needs to be put into the context he provides in poem civ, where he draws an interesting distinction between what Tappo and friend wrongly consider to be curses and real malediction against Lesbia.¹⁵⁰ But Catullus clearly also uses stronger abuse, similar to that of Cicero in speaking of Clodia, particularly as a *meretrix*. In poem lviii, he is not pulling any verbal punches when he accuses her of being the lowest form of prostitute, reduced to working the crossroads. I would interpret poem civ, therefore, as referring to the fairly strong banter evident in the relationship from the beginning, but not to the seriously repugnant abuse at the end.

Verbal abuse was part and parcel of political life for Roman men, and even more so for any women who dared enter this field. The particulars of Cicero's attack conforms to a practice of attacking women who involved themselves in what were deemed men's affairs through sexual allegation and association with highly negative mythical figures such as Medea. Clodia's close relationship with her brother Clodius increased her vulnerability to attack. As Edwards commented on Cicero's description of Clodia as a *meretrix* (*Pro Caelio* 49): 'These assertions should not be taken at face value. Rather they were attempts to associate political rivals with a female licence which was perceived as emblematic of threats to the well-being of the state.'¹⁵¹ Clodia's position in society generally and as the sister of the powerful Clodius in particular, were no deterrent to Catullus either; his attack on 'Lesbius' and Lesbia in poem lxxix is in terms of abuse equal to any of Cicero's attacks. We also hear that Milo's supporters chanted obscene verses against Clodia and Clodius.¹⁵² Cicero's Clodia and Catullus' Lesbia were certainly, therefore, tough women, accustomed to or expecting such attacks.

It is this public nature of Catullus' attack, so clearly revealed by the comparison with Cicero, that is striking. Earlier I mentioned how his attack was more akin to political invective than messages to an ex-lover. Cicero had good reason to resent Clodia, and by extension, her brother Clodius. His exile, which involved separation from his family as well as from the hubbub of Rome, and the destruction of his house, turned out to be temporary setbacks, although devastating in their effect at the time. The tarnishing of the glory in which the destroyer of Catiline should have basked would have been felt all his life, especially as a new man. However unfaithful Lesbia was, it is hard to see how Catullus could justify the same level of public demonisation. If it can be argued that an important aspect of this extreme language as used by Cicero and others is its underlying

function of demonizing political women, then Catullus would be using the language of political denigration of women not just simply abusing an unfaithful girlfriend. To some extent, it does not matter which of the sisters of Clodius we identify with Lesbia, but if it can be shown that Clodia Metelli sought an active role in politics, then she would be particularly suited to denigration by such language. I shall therefore now consider further evidence for these two points; the denigration of political women and for the political involvement of Clodia.

According to such later sources as Livy, women began involving themselves in actions considered more appropriate to men from the time of the early Republic. For example, Livy relates how a group of women, led by his mother Veturia, pleaded with Coriolanus not to attack Rome.¹⁵³ These incidents, however, were few and far between, and so not considered as a threat. The next significant political move we hear about was when in 296 Verginia, a patrician woman married to a plebeian, struck a blow against patrician exclusivity by founding an altar of Plebeian Chastity (*Pudicitia Plebeia*).¹⁵⁴ Then after the battle of Cannae in 216, Busa, a wealthy Apulian woman, looked after 10 000 soldiers, and gave them food, clothing and money, and was later even voted honours by the senate for doing so.¹⁵⁵ In 195, Aemilia, Scipio Africanus's wife, probably had some significant involvement in the repeal of the Lex Oppia which imposed restrictions on women's expenditure on display; other women also blockaded the houses of the tribunes who threatened to veto the repeal.¹⁵⁶ The repeal was also in favour of these women's male relatives who benefited from their ostentatious display of wealth.¹⁵⁷

In the later Republic, from the time of the Gracchi, the number of women mentioned in the sources as achieving a high level of public and political significance increases; Cornelia, daughter of Scipio Africanus and Aemilia mentioned above, was

largely responsible for the education of her two sons, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, after her husband's death in about 153 BC. She wrote letters that showed a deep involvement with the ethics of contemporary politics, and in one, preserved by Cornelius Nepos but possibly not authentic, she tried in the strongest terms to discourage her son, Gaius, from holding the tribunate.¹⁵⁸ In addition, she was mother-in-law to Scipio Aemilianus, who was married to her daughter Sempronia; she was therefore prominent among the movers and shakers in the last part of the second century BC. As the one choosing her sons' tutors¹⁵⁹ and helping to form their opinions, she was of significant influence herself. Indeed, her status was officially recognised by a statue being erected to her in the Portico of Metellus.¹⁶⁰

Women could be politically imaginative; just as men were testing the boundaries of offices such as the tribunate and eroding the power of *mos maiorum*, so the Vestal Claudia tested the limits of sanctity accorded to priestesses of her religious order. She was the daughter of Ap Claudius Pulcher (cos. 143), a progressive patrician supportive of the Gracchi. He was denied an official triumph for his war on the Salassi, but went ahead with a procession, in which a tribune tried to physically remove him. Claudia interposed herself between them, thus thwarting the tribune by her use of Vestal sanctity. As Bauman commented: 'In testing the limits of tribunician power, Claudia was in the mainstream of contemporary thinking.... Sanctity had never been defended in a positive way.... But now it was being given an extended meaning, it was being used in a constitutional, or would-be constitutional, weapon in the game of politics.'¹⁶¹

In the first century BC, the greater number of powerful women has led some critics to see 'the emergence of the influential woman almost as an institution' although it is only in their numbers rather than their contributions or methods of working that we should see a

change.¹⁶² Their greater numbers increased the threat to those trying to contain their power; in this period, we see the growing tendency of their political aspirations being masked by charges of debauchery and uncontrolled behaviour. Furthermore, the self-assertion of these women was also linked to a growing concern about lack of masculinity in men, exacerbating their threat; there are no longer statues or honours dedicated to these women. The accusation that these women failed to display sufficient self-control, exemplified by nymphomania, undermined their rights to equality and justified continuation of the male-dominated state and female disenfranchisement.

Alongside Clodia Metelli, we hear of Sempronia, Porcia, Tertulla, Fulvia, Palla and Servilia, among the élite, and Chelidon, Verres' mistress, probably a professional courtesan. There was also Praecia, who was probably of a minor family as non-senators are known by this name. She exerted considerable influence in the 70s through her lover, the consul, Cornelius Cethegus. Plutarch comments on her beauty and 'cheek' (*lamyria*) and her reputation as a 'fixer' (*drastērios*). Bauman explains her importance: 'Cornelius Cethegus, a populist turned Sullan who virtually controlled the city, became her lover, and political power passed into her hands; no public business could be transacted without Cethegus' approval and he did nothing without Praecia.'¹⁶³ Plutarch (*Luc.* 6.2-4) attributes Lucullus' obtaining the sought-after province of Cilicia to her enlisting the support of Cethegus. This was significant as it led to his command against Mithridates. While Hillard may argue that the real targets of these hostile accounts were the men mentioned, this cannot reduce these women to unfortunate, passive victims. They were visibly taking an active role in the lives of their partners and relatives.¹⁶⁴

Sempronia and Fulvia both played roles in the Catilinarian conspiracy, and Sallust left a detailed description of Sempronia as an example of a well-born, educated woman

who had fallen into debt and a wayward lifestyle, criticisms stressing her feminine lack of self control. She had been married to the consul of 77, D Iunius Brutus, and was the mother of Decimus Brutus. Sallust's portrayal of her is intriguing as his account gives her little part in the conspiracy to justify the length of his description. We are left asking what provoked such a digression? Boyd suggests one explanation: Catiline and Sempronia both represent a perversion of the natural order, Catiline by his lack of *virtus* and Sempronia by her possession of unsuitably masculine boldness (*virilis audacia*).¹⁶⁵ This is not to say, however, that Sempronia is introduced only as a rhetorical device. While the actual role of Sempronia is lost to us, her actual and near contemporaries would have been more aware of what she contributed. Its omission emphasises further the one-sided nature of Sallust's account and his lack of intention to give her a fair historical record.

Fulvia was also presented as a woman of high birth but low morals, although Sallust informs us that it was her role as mistress of Q Curio that allowed her to furnish Cicero with the information that led to his defeat of Catiline.¹⁶⁶ Fulvia's list of husbands is impressive: Clodius, the tribune C Scribonius Curio and Mark Antony. One other fact that we know about her reveals significant activity on behalf of her husband, Antony. When Antony was in the East, Fulvia and his brother Lucius instigated rebellions by Italian cities against Octavian's land confiscations. Her personal involvement can be seen from the insults inscribed on the slingshots used: those of the supporters of Fulvia and Lucius carried insults to Octavius, while those of Octavian's supporters, carried insults against both L Antonius and Fulvia.¹⁶⁷ Babcock has argued convincingly for a long political career, involving all three of her husbands rather than just Antony as usually argued: 'The woman whose role in the Perusine War was prominent enough to establish the reputation Fulvia enjoyed did not become aware of her political potential suddenly. There is indeed

enough similarity of actions and even of method in the careers of her husbands to suggest quite strongly that this woman whose ambition was to 'rule a ruler' may have played a vital if not publicly recognized part in all three careers.¹⁶⁸

Servilia was half-sister of Cato, mother of Brutus and allegedly mistress of Caesar. She had a role in finding a husband for Cicero's daughter,¹⁶⁹ and appears to have done much political work behind the scenes; Cicero records how she cut him short in a meeting in June 44, and told him that she would see to the changing of the provinces for her son and his colleague, Cassius, as they were far from content with the senatorial allotment of the supervision of the grain supplies.¹⁷⁰ In another meeting with Cicero, on 25 July 43, called by her, she wanted to discuss Cicero's plans for Brutus to bring his army to Italy.¹⁷¹ Such behaviour clearly did not endear her to Cicero, although she was not vilified in the same way as other women.

Cicero is also our source for Chelidon. In his speech against Verres, he gives an account of her activities: 'She was Verres' mistress, and while he was praetor she controlled the civil law and contract disputes, and was also dominant in maintenance contracts. She only had to whisper in Verres' ear and he would change a decision already given, or disregard his own precedents. People flocked to her house in search of new laws, new decisions, new procedures, while the houses of the jurisconsults were deserted. Some of her customers paid her in cash, others signed notes of hand. It was more like the praetor's tribunal than a prostitute's house.'¹⁷² While Cicero would not have been unduly concerned about the veracity of the detail of his portrayal, he would have been at pains to be plausible. His account therefore informs us about the sort of activities in which a woman like Chelidon could be portrayed as playing a part.

To return to the élite women, we know that Porcia and Tertulla were involved with the political activities of their husbands, Brutus and Cassius, although, insofar as we know, sufficiently behind the scenes as not to provoke attacks¹⁷³ Aurelia, Caesar's mother, also was very much involved in key events, most notably the *Bona Dea* scandal. Although Caesar was married to Pompeia, it appears that it was Aurelia who presided over the celebration.¹⁷⁴ Subsequently, she was a witness against Clodius, attesting that he had been present despite his alibi. Caesar himself did not appear as a witness, and Clodius managed to secure an acquittal. Caesar then famously divorced Pompeia for merely being suspected of a liaison with Clodius. It appears that there was little affection between wife and mother-in-law.

The role of Aurelia in the trial of Clodius also gives a hint that we may be in danger of underestimating the activities of woman in the forum and that such places were not strictly 'engendered' space, in this case, intrinsically male. While women might not in general plea on their own behalf or others – with exceptions such as Maesia of Sentinum and Afrania – they could appear as witnesses or instigators of court proceedings through their guardians or male relatives.¹⁷⁵ Appearing as witnesses gave them a public voice and their general participation in the courts would strengthen their relationships with those involved through the usual channels of *amicitia*.¹⁷⁶ The forum was a commercial area, and possibly the most striking building of the forum at Pompeii is the ornate entrance to the building of the priestess Eumachia. The forum was also not a restricted area: when a trial such as that of Caelius was taking place, there is no reason to presume only men in the audience.

It should also be remembered that much of the political activity that would have involved women would have been behind-the-scenes, leaving no record; if conducted

according to the standards of acceptable behaviour such activity would not merit negative reporting. The status and connections conferred by marriage could be used actively by women as well as being imposed upon them. The potential for influencing husbands or lovers has been an aspect mentioned in the discussion of several individual women. Age made a key difference: few teenage brides would have had much influence on their older husbands, but élite women expected to have a series of marriages. Wiseman argues for three marriages for Clodius's mother, to Appius Claudius, Caecilius Metellus and Mucius Scaevola, all with consular progeny. Fulvia's three highly placed husbands have already been mentioned. The mature wife would gain experience and a growing ability to involve herself in political affairs with each successive marriage.

Continued involvement with brothers, and other members of their natal family was also very important: 'the political weight assigned to daughters of the aristocracy as critical intermediaries in marriage alliances required them to further the goals of their natal family among relatives by marriage.'¹⁷⁷ Linking up with other powerful women would also be an avenue of power: 'Excluded from political and military positions, themselves, women could nonetheless help male connections secure such positions, often by woman-to-woman lobbying.'¹⁷⁸ Finally, their children were a source of potential power: 'Since the public success of offspring reflected well upon parental training, women were disposed to invest emotionally and economically in their son's political careers and assist their upward progress through vigorous participation in patronage networks,'¹⁷⁹ Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, is an obvious example. Cicero's wife, Terentia, also arranged their daughter Tullia's marriage to Dolabella, a connection at odds with Cicero's attempts to maintain friendship with Appius.¹⁸⁰

Dixon has also argued that women were also much involved in the system of *amicitiae* and *clientelae*. She points out that when Roscius fled to Rome, charged with parricide, Caecilia Metella became his declared protector, even though she had numerous male relatives who could have taken up his cause; it was she who chose Cicero to defend him. 'This strongly suggests that she, no less than her brothers, cousins and husband, had her own band of dependants, and that she was an active participant in the necessarily indirect political gestures of the Sullan era.'¹⁸¹ Dixon's general conclusion is that elite Roman women would naturally take a role in relationships with other men and women of their class and with those of lower status: 'Expected by virtue of her position to settle arguments for her social inferiors, to intervene on behalf of friends with social equals or near-equals, and to grant favours for which she could stipulate a return, she was competent to join in the machinations which not only preceded elections but continued throughout the year.'¹⁸²

These snippets of evidence suggest a far wider role for Roman women than generally acknowledged or promoted as suitable by Roman men. It is also clear that through selective reporting, whatever its motive, and by exaggerating sexual activities or female weakness, women were effectively silenced, and their real role more or less effaced from contemporary historical records.¹⁸³ As argued by Hillard, the knowledge that political activity would provoke censure on themselves and make their husbands liable to the charge of effeminate lack of control would also have acted as a deterrent to many women.¹⁸⁴ Those women whose involvement cannot be ignored have their activities reduced to the effects of sexual rapacity and immorality rather than political intentions; as sexual transgressions could be a way of attacking and undermining a male politician, so attacking female sexual licentiousness could have a similar effect. As with men, transgressions of

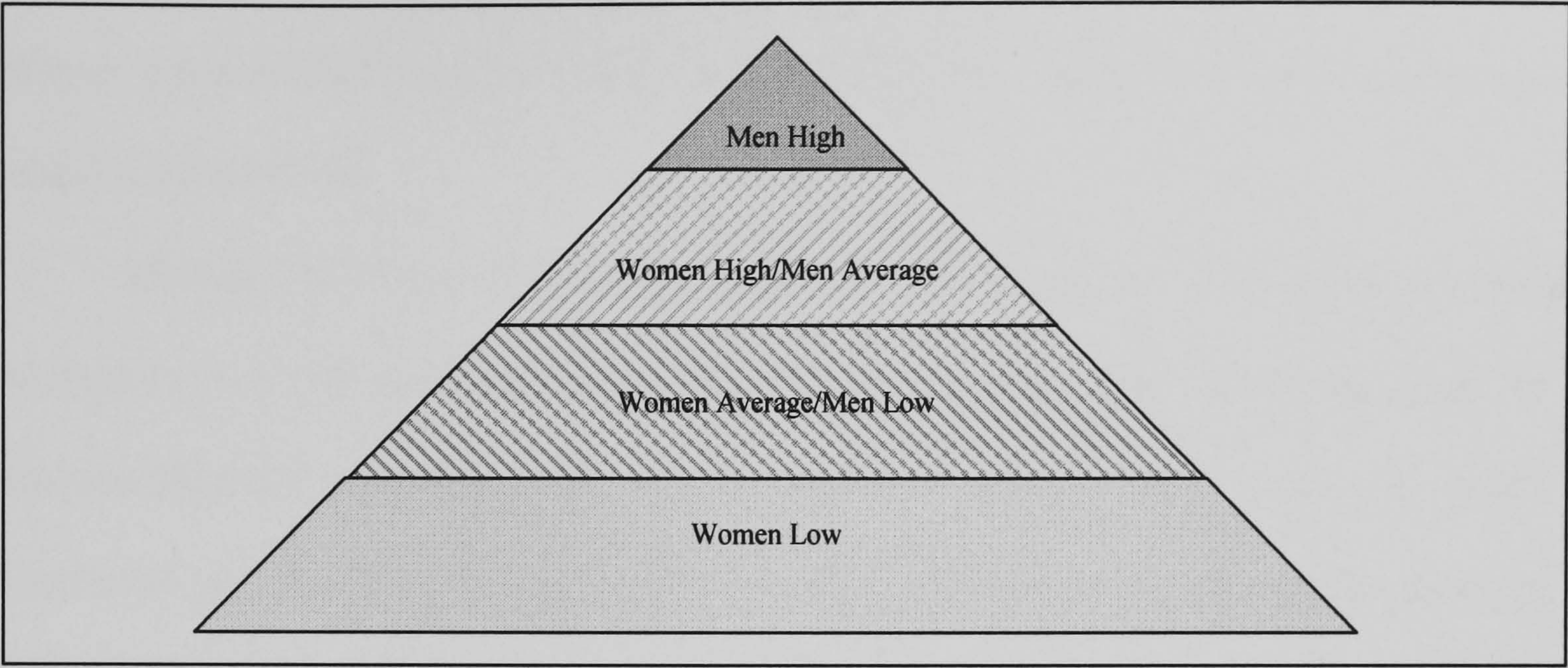
one social boundary would be used to insinuate other transgressions.¹⁸⁵ Dixon summarised the situation: ‘The tradition of punishing female ‘uppitiness’ with sexual slander...runs deep.... Many of our most vivid and enduring images of political women in the Republican and imperial eras are ultimately based on hostile traditions which sexualise them.’¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, as Edwards pointed out: ‘This [sexual] license is particularly associated with women of the senatorial élite, the wives, daughters and sisters of Rome’s political leaders.’¹⁸⁷

Do these women also put into question their ‘femininity’ through their *virilis audacia* or *continentia*? This may appear at first a strange question to ask, but it has significance in revealing complexities within the debate of Roman sexuality not always acknowledged. For example, Edwards is right in her discussion of the virtue *continentia* to point out that ‘[w]hile a ‘good’ woman would be one who exemplified this virtue to a degree greater than did inferior women, it was a virtue exhibited to the greatest degree by men.’ But what she does not explore is whether some woman could show this virtue to a greater degree than some men. The chart (Figure 2) shows how there is considerable overlap between men of low or average moral integrity and women of average and high moral integrity. Such overlap also exists if we exchange the focus from moral integrity to social status, or a combination of the two. A woman such as the mother of the Gracchi was of superior birth and higher personal morality than many Roman males, including those of the élite. Clodia, a daughter of the Claudii, wife of a consul, and sister to praetors and tribunes, was unlikely to consider herself inferior in status to Catullus, a provincial noble.

There is also the question of whether a woman such as Clodia would consider herself ‘effeminate.’ This relates to the notion of women as ‘same’ or ‘other’; Hallett argues that for élite Roman men, ‘conceptualization of the female sex is a bipartite one.

One part appears to reflect an assumption of *sex polarity* and female alterity.... The other part of this conceptualization, categorizing women as *Same*, reflects an assumption of *sex*

Figure 2: Moral Integrity/Social Status



unity, a view that unifies male and female by ascribing to the latter qualities and talent culturally valued in the former.’¹⁸⁸ While a women such as Clodia may display manly attributes, however, it was a different matter for men showing feminine traits: For example, as Hallett points out, to represent men as wool-workers was to insinuate lack of masculinity.¹⁸⁹

For the Roman world, this would mean that the accusations of effeminacy did not automatically mean that Romans thought all women inferior to men. All Roman women to a greater or lesser degree suffered from ‘womanly’ qualities, but some restrained their ‘womanly weakness’ to be more like men. Those who showed sufficient *continentia* could be considered on a level with many men. Just as plebeian men could act with patrician spirit, so could women act with ‘male’ spirit. As Fantham has pointed out, Valerius Maximus describes how Verginia’s father acted out of the accepted plebeian role and she out of the accepted female role. Valerius also gives the example of Lucretia, whom he

describes as having a masculine spirit assigned to a feminine body.¹⁹⁰ Strength of mind and purpose in a woman, of course, also meant restricting any political involvement. Over-enthusiasm in this sphere would transform positive *continentia* into negative *virilis audacia*; it was over stepping the mark of acting like a man.¹⁹¹ Sempronia has been already mentioned as one who was accused of such behaviour. Cicero would clearly have added Clodia Metelli.

Having established therefore that there was a clear tradition of denigrating political women by invective diminishing their actions to merely the sexual, I return, therefore, to the possible political role of Clodia. Bauman argues for clear political ambitions: ‘With Clodia we meet our first sustained political strategist. As true a scion of the arrogant and eccentric Claudii Pulchri as her brother [Clodius]...a niece of the Vestal Claudia who defied a tribunician veto in 143, and a remote descendant of Claudia who vilified the Roman plebs in 246.’¹⁹² Wiseman points out the sheer illustriousness of her family: ‘Six generations of consuls back to Ap Claudius Caecus, and another six before that to the first known Appius Claudius, consul in the fifteenth year of the Republic.’¹⁹³ Taylor reminds us that of the plebeian families, ‘the most prominent of all, [was] the prolific and wealthy house of the Caecilii Metelli.’¹⁹⁴ Clodia belonged to one family, and married into the other. It is also worth making the point that both families were maintaining their positions at the height of political activity in the generations contemporary with Catullus; ‘When Sulla, as consul in 88, married a Caecilia Metella, there were those among the nobility who thought him unworthy of her.’¹⁹⁵ It is also possible, as mentioned earlier, that Clodia’s uncle was adopted into the Metelli, which would also reflect close links between the two families, maintained by Clodia’s marriage to her cousin, the son of this former Claudius.

In understanding Clodia's position, it is helpful to examine a comparison which Catullus may have intended his reader to make, between Lesbia and Queen Berenice of poem lxvi. Both were leading women of their time, one a Queen, the other, a patrician aristocrat whose family has been described as 'princes of the state.'¹⁹⁶ Both women were involved in politics through their own family and through marriage. For both elite families, highly jealous of their status, marriage was dynastic and so involved a close relative – Berenice married her second cousin, while Metellus was either half-brother or cousin to Clodia. Both husbands were powerful men of state – one a king, the other a consul and general. Both women were mature rather than in their first youth, actively involved in life rather than passive or submissive, and in some way exceptional. Clodia's involvement I shall expand upon below; Berenice was famous for her horse racing, and was celebrated in the first victory ode to a woman. Both were intelligent and very well educated; Berenice was expected by Callimachus to understand and appreciate his erudite allusions, as was Clodia by Catullus.¹⁹⁷ High standards of living go without saying with such women, but it is interesting to note that perfume, a significant status symbol, is mentioned in connection with both women.

Like Berenice, Clodia had influence with and through her husband; Cicero records asking Clodia to help him restore his relationship with Nepos, Metellus Celer's brother.¹⁹⁸ Clodia was also very much involved in the career of her younger brother, Clodius. Clodius expected as much and apparently complained to Cicero in June 60 when he felt she did not do enough; Clodius wanted more of Metellus' share of seating space for his Sicilian clients than she was willing to give. The seating space referred to was that allotted to the consul, and it appears from this that Clodia had some role in controlling this important political asset. Skinner argues that the point of this complaint addressed to Cicero, also a patron of

the Sicilians, is rather more to point out Clodius' superior powers of largesse – even when thus restricted – to his Sicilian clients compared to that of Cicero's.¹⁹⁹ As Skinner commented: 'Clodius' remark indicates that he regarded his sister as a valuable political asset and flaunted her as such before his rivals.'²⁰⁰

Clodia's commitment to her brother could lead to a conflict of interests, however, although her ties to her natal family proved strongest. In the same letter of Cicero, we hear that there was 'civil war' between Clodia and her husband over the latter's opposition to Clodius' attempt to transfer to the plebs.²⁰¹ Metellus, just before he died, even threatened to kill Clodius with his own hands if he did not behave.²⁰² Soon after Metellus' death and Clodius' transference to the plebs, there was a family council at Clodia's villa at Solonium.²⁰³ The tension experienced by Clodia between the marital alliance with the Metelli and her own loyalty to the Claudii was not unusual; as Gruen has argued in the sixties and fifties BC, there was 'a growing tension between the claims of the *gens* and the demands of politics.'²⁰⁴ Clodia being politically aware if not active probably exacerbated and further complicated these tensions between her role as wife and sister.²⁰⁵

The strength of the Claudian family unity is also referred to in negative terms by Cicero. Cicero accuses Clodius of unprincipled political prostitution, attacking him for selling out to anyone while only committing to his family. In this, Clodius undermines the fundamental institution of *amicitia* and the duties of friendship that create an aspect of the harmony of the orders that Cicero tried to promote. The closeness between Clodia and Clodius effectively meant that an attack on one was an attack on the other; as Dixon pointed out about the attacks of Cicero, 'Many of his forensic speeches were as much part of political exchange as his senatorial repartee – it is not surprising that Clodia, elder sister of his arch political enemy Publius Clodius Pulcher, was the object of his biting wit in both

venues.²⁰⁶ It worked the other way too; Plutarch reported that one of the reasons for Cicero's involvement in the Bona Dea scandal was Terentia's jealousy of Clodia's romantic intentions towards Cicero.²⁰⁷ The ultimate expression of this unnatural family unity is of course the accusations of incest against Clodius and his sisters.

According to Cicero, she also bound young men to her by loans.²⁰⁸ Such loans could be misrepresented for political attack on both men and women; Cicero himself was accused of having an illicit relationship with a female creditor, Caerellia.²⁰⁹ They are also an indication of patronage and *amicitiae*, often connected with convivial settings; Roman women, unlike Greek women, attended dinner parties. As Dixon pointed out 'This social interaction was invested with economic significance because of the role played by gifts, loans, favours and legacies in the Roman institutions of friendship and patronage.'²¹⁰ It is therefore not likely that Clodia's loans were really to ensure sexual favours, but more to cement political affiliations, the normal reason for such activity.²¹¹ Clodia is also linked by Cicero with securing the acquittal of Sextus Cloelius, Clodius' principal henchman, shortly before the trial of Caelius.²¹² This is often dismissed as having minor significance; for example, Rankin comments, 'When Cicero refers to her influence being used to procure the acquittal of a certain Sextus Clodius, he gives a measure of the pettiness of her political influence.'²¹³ While Cloelius may not have been a major figure, the list of his activities given by Cicero, including the burning of his house, is not insignificant.²¹⁴

His trial should also be seen as an attack on his *amicus* Clodius; the courts were very much a part of the political arena in Republican Rome, and *amicitiae* often dictated the decision to prosecute, the composition of defence or prosecuting team, and the outcome of the trial.²¹⁵ Dixon points out the political significance of her actions: 'Given the power of P Clodius in the period 60-52 BC, it was an attribution of political importance to Clodia

to link her in this way with her brother as an active participant in the settlement of feuds and protection of friends in the law-court.²¹⁶ This foray into the legal scene was also not a one-off event; she quickly followed up by her involvement in the attack on Caelius, who by the time of the trial had become a significant figure showing some independence of the main politicians. Cicero, defending Caelius, plausibly portrayed her as a significant threat: ‘Never let it be said that this same woman, in collusion with her brother who is also her husband, has been able first to preserve a thieving rogue and then to destroy a fine young man as well.’²¹⁷ It is probably significant that Clodia’s interest in Caelius started just at that time when Caelius was launching his political career, and may even be seen as signifying his emergence as a political figure.²¹⁸ It is also possible that the ending of the affair was as much to do with Caelius’ involvement with Ptolemy, against the interests of Clodius, as for personal reasons.²¹⁹

Such a trial was a major political event in Rome. The factors to consider generally in relation to a criminal trial are very apposite here.²²⁰ For the accused – in this case Caelius – citizenship, rank and property were at stake. The pleaders for the defence were men of great eminence, including Cicero and Crassus, and Caelius’ character witnesses would have included other men of high rank, possibly also deputations from provinces and municipalities. Judge and jurors were all men of rank, and the trial would have taken place in the open forum where everyone was free to come and listen, attracted no doubt by considerable publicity. Furthermore, Gruen argues: ‘But whatever the origins of Caelius’ prosecution and the truth or falsity of the allegations, the case took on significant political overtones. It belongs in the context of indirect attacks on Pompeius Magnus and the bitter feud between Clodius’ circle and their enemies, which dominated Roman politics in 57 and early 56.’²²¹

Cicero gives Clodia a major role in instigating the trial, but this does not necessarily reflect the true situation. As Bauman comments, 'Cicero has a great deal to say about Clodia's part in the case (*Cael.* 30, 35, 40, 50, 53, 55-69), but there is no consensus as to the implications of what he says. Some see Clodia as the driving force behind the prosecution; others assign her a subordinate role; and still others almost write her out of the case.'²²² Her position as a witness, however, cannot be denied its significance. As Bauman points out, Cicero deals with two of the five counts that involve Clodia as a key witness, while Crassus had dealt with the other three prior to Cicero.²²³

Bauman also argues that a third court case involved Clodia although indirectly; M Camurtius and C Caesernius were both prosecuted for their attack on Vettius who had insulted Clodia. Clodia was certainly, therefore, involved in the courts in a way not seen before with a woman. As Bauman said: 'not everyone could make free use of the public criminal courts in pursuit of a private vendetta. Men had been doing that sort of thing for hundreds of years, but Clodia was the first woman.'²²⁴ Bauman also points out the significance of Clodia's activities in the courts: 'If it is found that she was able to stir up prosecutions at will, she will have been a most formidable performer in the political arena.'²²⁵

It is sometimes said that the Caelius trial was the end of her political activities; Wiseman, for example, talks of 'the character-assassination so effectively carried out by Caelius and by Cicero himself.'²²⁶ There is no evidence, however, to support the idea that she withdrew defeated by Cicero. Indeed, as Bauman has pointed out, it is only an assumption made from his later career and presence in Rome that Caelius was acquitted; the outcome may have been a close call.²²⁷ Rankin is probably closer to the truth: 'The 'Caelius' case was a social defeat for Clodia, but nothing that we know of her, or her

family history would suggest that she was broken by it.²²⁸ As he points out, we need not assume that she was inactive after the Caelius trial just from historical silence, or that she moved away from Rome; she still wanted her gardens in 45 BC. The evidence we do have is that she had weathered insults and abusive attacks before. Furthermore, she was known to even hit back; it is possible that Vettius was punished with anal rape for some crime against her, possibly associated with the nickname *Quadrantaria*.²²⁹ It is also notable that this was not the end of Clodian attacks on Caelius; in February 54, Clodius' friend Servius Pola brought Caelius to trial, although he was unsuccessful.²³⁰

There is, therefore, evidence to suggest that Clodia Metelli had serious political aspirations and it is likely that these, considered unacceptable in a female, led to her character being attacked by such men as Catullus and Cicero in terms of sexual profligacy and moral depravity. It also explains why both men felt confident enough to make such an abusive attack on a Roman matron of such standing and family connections. It is also worth pointing out that Clodia's career also supports the fact that the influence of mature Roman women was not purely through their husbands – the traditional 'supportive' role. They particularly appear to have influence in the marriages of the next generation and in their male relative's political careers. So, while Clodia made political use of her marriage with Metellus, his death was not the end of her career. Nor do we see her remarried, as Cicero describes her as a widow at the trial of Caelius and managing her estate without any clear male intervention, much later in 45 BC.²³¹ This was clearly not for lack of attractiveness, and her retaining her independence should be viewed as a deliberate strategy on her part, and as such would have also been seen as a threat to the traditional forms of control of women.

Such a woman as Clodia would have obvious attractions for a young politician with a career to promote – besides her well attested attractiveness. An adulterous affair with an élite Roman woman, as Edwards argues, could also be a sign of power and masculinity, and so prestigious although immoral.²³² Catullus could therefore be displaying his power in portraying his adulterous relationship with her. Furthermore, Edwards argues, ‘the association of political and sexual power suggests that the two could be mutually reinforcing. Adulterers were villains but glamorous ones.’²³³

The question less obviously answered – and rarely asked – is why someone of Clodia’s status, that is one of the most noble and active senatorial families in contemporary Rome, would have an interest in a poet of only provincial nobility, from a distant colonial town? Just as Clodia offered more than physical attractiveness, there were several ways in which Catullus might have been useful to the Claudii. Firstly, Cornell has pointed out that a ‘family trait was their non-military character...Suetonius, *Tib.* 2, enumerates their 28 consulships, 5 dictatorships, and 7 censorships, but only 6 triumphs and 2 orations.’²³⁴ An imaginative, young poet might therefore provide something useful in the publicity and image-promotion line. This might not necessarily be through elevated verse, glorifying the Claudii; poems denigrating enemies would be just as useful in promoting the Claudian brand, and Catullus’ abusive poetry is more in line with what would have been required for attacking enemies. We know from Suetonius how effective Catullus could be and it is likely that his attacks on Caesar extended beyond the poems that we have in the collection. On possibly even lower a literary level were the obscene verses required for the *claqueurs*, a gang of whom was used by Clodius.²³⁵ We know that Calvus wrote such verses in his epigrams, and there is no reason to suggest that his best friend Catullus did not do

likewise.²³⁶ Tatum's comment about Calvus can equally apply to Catullus: 'His role in the circle of Clodius and his sister make him available to be of service to Clodius.'²³⁷

Financially, the family had not had the benefit of governorships in the recent generation, and Appius (*pater*) had been banished during the civil war, with some loss of property. While the family was in no way poor, three senatorial careers in one generation was an almost overwhelming financial burden for any family. The Claudian brand, however, was clearly marketable in marriage terms, and not just for the women; Clodius' wife, Fulvia, was probably a very rich heiress.²³⁸ Clodia Metelli also appears to have owned real estate in highly desirable areas of Rome.²³⁹ Real estate does not mean ready cash, however, and this was something a rich young provincial with political ambitions might have provided. Voting power was something else, and in chapter 2, I discussed the significant advantages that 'Gallia Togata' may have given Catullus as a representative resident in Rome. Taylor reveals the power of the Cisalpine vote: '[Caesar] was not, in his Gallic province, removed from electioneering; he could not go to the *comitia* himself, but he could send down instructed delegations of voters, and of soldiers, most of whom were enrolled from Cisalpine Gaul.'²⁴⁰ Catullus may therefore have offered Italian support; something that Clodius was lacking as his basis of power was very much urban.²⁴¹

It is also revealing to consider the nature of Clodia's other lover, Caelius. As mentioned above, her relationship with him started just when he was becoming a serious politician, and ended when he began to work against the interests of Clodius. Frank suggested: 'Perhaps she needed his [Catullus'] aid in her political intrigues, for her troublesome younger brother was again at his escapades and required all the enticing influence of his sister to save him from political annihilation.'²⁴² Even when no longer able to dispose of a consul's power, she remained, like Sex. Cloelius, a recognized

associate of Clodius.²⁴³ But it is possible that Frank may have got only half way to the truth here; it was problems with Clodius that made her look outside the family net certainly, but not to help Clodius, as Frank presumes, but to promote her own political ambitions. For, as Skinner points out, how do we reconcile her position as trusted associate of her brother with her revealing information to Atticus, the known friend of Clodius' enemy, Cicero?²⁴⁴ Skinner explains: 'Her earlier championship of Clodius notwithstanding, she was not then, and perhaps never was, his docile tool, but was ready to act autonomously in pursuit of her own private interests.'²⁴⁵ She was after all just as much one of the Claudii as her brothers.²⁴⁶

It is also hard to pin down Clodius' interests during this time; his career was hardly straightforward, and his allegiances changed constantly. His unconventional career started in the winter of 69/8 when he appeared from Plutarch's account to be involved in a minor form of mutiny against his commanding officer, his brother-in-law, Lucullus.²⁴⁷ Mulroy has argued that Cicero's portrayal of Clodius as a self-centred mutineer is unlikely to be accurate, pointing out the fact that no action on a potentially capital charge was taken against Clodius.²⁴⁸ He was taken on subsequently by his other brother-in-law, Marcius Rex, to serve in Cilicia, where he was captured and ransomed. Then in Syria, there was again trouble as his two brothers-in-law supported rival Seleucid claimants. The *Bona Dea* scandal in December 62 was the next major incident in his career. Plutarch, who was very influenced by Cicero, presented Clodius as being 'arrogant, bold and second to none in his reputation for doing disgusting things.'²⁴⁹ The trial has to be seen, however, in the context of politically motivated prosecutions; Clodius' enemies wished to make political capital out of his religious infringement. Caesar stayed neutral, arguably in respect of Clodius' power.²⁵⁰

Whatever the truth of the matter – Clodius pleaded an alibi – he was acquitted and Cicero's actions as a witness against him created a lasting enmity between the two men.²⁵¹ Clodius would have been convicted, according to Cicero, if a *Calvus ex Nanneianis* had not sent a slave to the jury with bribes and promises involving the good names of 'certain women', one of which he later identifies as Clodia.²⁵² This Calvus may well have been Catullus' best friend, already mentioned as connected with Clodius as the writer of verses for his claquers.²⁵³ Cicero also mentions that Clodius was supported by *barbatuli iuvenes* ('goatee-bearded youths') and *adulescentes nobiles* ('well-born young men').²⁵⁴ It is possible that Catullus was one of these, supporting a man described as *urbanissimus* by Cicero.²⁵⁵

The trial over, lots could be drawn, and Clodius' quaestorian province was Sicily. During the *dominatio* of the triumvirate in 59, Clodius changed sides several times.²⁵⁶ Early in the year, he supported the triumvirs, for example, he backed Vatinius' proposal to establish a Gallic command for Caesar²⁵⁷ and refused to support his brother-in-law Metellus Celer in opposing Caesar's landbill.²⁵⁸ In return, he gained his transfer to the plebs (*traductio ad plebem*). Subsequently, Clodius declared himself *inimicissimus Caesaris* and announced his intention to revoke Caesar's consular *acta*.²⁵⁹ He stood successfully in the elections for the tribunate (for 58) without Caesar's support. Before the end of the year, however, he had renewed his loyalty: 'Clodius, it had to be obvious to all, was the dynasts' new champion in the college of tribunes.'²⁶⁰ Accordingly, in 58 BC, as Tatum comments, 'he committed himself to a public demonstration of his alignment with the dynasts,'²⁶¹ signalling his support by his actions against Bibulus and by supporting Caesar's legate Vatinius in his bid for the aedileship. At the same time, however, he also showed his own political inventiveness through his organization of popular violence in

Vatinius' support and in support of his own legislative programme as tribune.²⁶²

Furthermore, while he started the year as the 'dynasts' man', after getting rid of Cicero and securing his corn bill, he began to seek senatorial approval through confronting Pompey; 'It was Clodius' intention, then, to make himself Pompey's principal rival in the city, an enterprise that would enable him to exploit his popular following, even while he earned the senate's toleration.'²⁶³

The next year, 57 BC, saw several setbacks for Clodius; gangs were organised to challenge his own in the streets and law courts, Cicero was recalled and Pompey began to fight back. Despite this, Clodius achieved top of the poll in the election for the aedileship of 56. He attacked Pompey for failing to deliver appropriate action regarding the grain supply in February and March, and clashed with him at the trial of Milo in February, suggesting that Crassus should take over from him in going to Alexandria. Through the conference at Luca, however, Caesar restored good relations between Pompey and Clodius, who reserved his enmity for Cicero. Cicero's bias may account for his assertion that Clodius was behind the trial of P Sestius in which Cicero, Hortensius, Crassus and Licinius Calvus defended, and Cicero took the opportunity of Vatinius being a prosecution witness to attack him and his sponsor Caesar.²⁶⁴ Another event in the courts involving Clodius was the acquittal of Sex. Cloelius in March. Clodius, as Tatum argues, was possibly on a *legatio libera* in 55, and resumes his career at Rome in 54, with his usual intensity, especially in the courts.²⁶⁵ It was Milo who finally ended Clodius' career, while he was praetor in 52. Their two gangs clashed, and Clodius was the loser for once. Interestingly, his wife, Fulvia, retaliated, politically and effectively through her handling of his dead, broken body, pre-empting her later husband, Antony's actions with Caesar.²⁶⁶

It is difficult, therefore, to pinpoint the relationship of Clodius and Clodia with Julius Caesar. As Tatum put it, 'Clodius' schemes remained unpredictable: one moment he attacked the triumvirs, the next he moved against the *boni*. Doubtless he hoped to cut a truly independent path.'²⁶⁷ Babcock comes to the same conclusion: 'Clodius was in reality opportunistically working for Clodius.'²⁶⁸ Clodius' one consistent political relationship was his antagonism towards Cicero. Negative attacks on Caesar by Catullus in his poetry do not necessarily, therefore, date to a time of hostility between Catullus and the Claudii; they may have been part of Clodius' plan to undermine Caesar's position at a time when Clodius did not wish to support him; they. Furthermore, Clodius' independence emphasises his personal political ambition, and by extension, that of Clodia, both as his supporter and for herself. This was a man who was vying for power with the members of the 'triumvirate', the three most powerful men in Rome. Tatum assessed his importance thus: 'It is quite simply impossible to imagine Roman politics in the 50s without Clodius and without his particular combination of demagoguery and statesmanship.'²⁶⁹

Such a man Catullus became connected with through his relationship with Clodia. Several of Catullus' friends were also involved with Clodius; Calvus is an obvious example, both supporting and working against Clodius. As mentioned above, he composed verses for Clodius, although alongside Asinius Pollio, also a friend of Catullus, he was involved in an unsuccessful attempt to prosecute Clodius' friend, C Cato in 56. Hortalsus, another friend of Catullus, confronted Clodius when he prosecuted Procilius.²⁷⁰

In discussing the political benefits for both Clodius and Catullus that might have come from the relationship, it would be wrong to suggest that this was the main reason for Catullus' love affair with Clodia. As with any 'friendship', however, there could be mutual gain in more ways than one, and my argument is that mutual, political *beneficium* is

certainly an aspect that should be considered. There is another political element, moreover, to the affair, and that is the terminology that Catullus employs to describe the relationship; the language of *amicitia*. While this might seem to us a natural word to use, its meaning cannot be rendered simply ‘friendship’ when it is used in conjunction with other terminology such as *fides*, *beneficium*, *pietas* and *foedus*, the language of aristocratic obligation and alliance. In this context, the relationship referred to was the fundamentally political arrangement, called *amicitia*, between Roman élite *amici*.²⁷¹ While élite Roman men may be *amici* as we understand the word ‘friends’, for example, Atticus and Cicero, when a Roman man speaks in terms of *foedus* and *fides*, it is political alliance rather than friendship that is meant; so for example, when Cicero wrote to Crassus, he could ask him to consider his letter a *foedus* rather than a simple letter.²⁷² Catullus uses this notion of *amicitia* to imply advantageous association rather than affectionate friendship in several of the poems; in poem xxviii, for example, he talks of being advised to seek noble friends (*pete nobiles amicos*).

By using this terminology, Catullus should be seen as adapting the political language of *amicitia* as a metaphor for his love and this use of *amicitia* and its related terms, was highly innovative. It was also clearly deliberate as in poem lxxii, rather than saying he loved Lesbia as a father loves his sons and daughters, he says sons and sons-in-law, echoing the élite Roman man’s assumption that marriage was an instrument in forming or cementing political alliances rather than anything to do with love; daughters were of use in forming such relationships, but not in themselves, and so are not mentioned.²⁷³ Furthermore, Catullus’ attitude to his love affair itself was something completely different to a casual sexual relationship or to marriage; it was quite

revolutionary, and only an innovative use of *amicitia* could capture the messages Catullus wished to convey to Lesbia.²⁷⁴

Catullus needed a term to describe his relationship with Clodia that signified enduring commitment and mutual benefit. The adulterous start to their affair hardly made marriage a suitable term.²⁷⁵ It is also anachronistic to think in terms of marriage signifying an affection-based, single commitment for life in an age when many elite marriages were politically inspired, instigated by parents, and often with very young brides expected to submit to their husbands. There is no reason to suspect a love-match with any of the marriages of the Clodia sisters, and all three were no longer with their known husbands by the mid-fifties. Marriage was also something that Clodia probably did not want; it is likely that she had had children and she showed no inclination to remarry after the death of Metellus as she was still a widow at the trial of Caelius, long after her official mourning had ended. While nominally under the guardianship of her brother Appius as *paterfamilias*, she was highly independent and as a rich, attractive widow with powerful relatives, marriage had very little to offer her.²⁷⁶ Catullus records that she said that were she to marry, she would rather marry Catullus than anyone else, but this does not show any inclination to take that step.²⁷⁷ It might have been an attractive proposition to Catullus, as a provincial noble, but it was not the right relationship for her.

It is perhaps worth noting that Catullus does present a positive attitude towards the institution of marriage in the poems, while rejecting it as the relationship for him and Clodia.²⁷⁸ In poem lxi about the marriage of Junia Aurunculeia and Manlius Torquatus, marriage is presented positively; both partners are presented as young and wanting to marry the other, there is the hope of fidelity, and children are mentioned. Catullus actually seems to suggest a greater level of commitment than often suggested for married men; Torquatus

must give up his slave boy-friend. In poem lxii, while the virgins give strong arguments for not marrying and Catullus seems to show much empathy for young brides-to-be, it appears that the boys win. The women, however, will be subsumed in these relationships and their main role will be to please their husbands and produce children. They are at a different time of life and, in part because of this, quite different women to Clodia. Catullus speaks of his house being lost with the death of his brother as he is not able to have heirs while in a non-marital relationship; Lesbia is in herself son and sons-in-law to Catullus. Catullus does not therefore reject marriage as an institution, or portray it as socially corrupt and meaningless; it was just not the right one for Clodia.²⁷⁹

Where the concept of marriage was important was in the loyalty kept to the political friendship behind the marriage. If both sides fulfilled their obligations, then a political *amicitia* would be long lasting. Fathers-in-law should love both their sons and their sons-in-law as Catullus said (lxxii 123). Their sons they controlled as a *paterfamilias*, and with marriage *sine manu*, they controlled the marital status of their daughters. Even divorce need not break up the *amicitia*: ‘The relations of two houses joined by marriage frequently continued when, as often happened, there had been a divorce. Cicero maintained friendship with two former sons-in-law from whom his daughter Tullia was divorced.’²⁸⁰ It was therefore in *amicitia* that one would expect commitment and good faith (*fides*), and this was the terminology that Catullus used. As Earl argued: ‘Since the whole of Roman political life was organized on the basis of unofficial custom, the paramount quality was good faith, *fides*. It was the corner-stone of the patron-client relationship and ensured the stability of factions formed among members of the nobility.’²⁸¹

There was an aspect of flexibility in *amicitia* that was also very important to the message Catullus wanted to convey. Just as a man might have several *amici*, Catullus

knew all along that he was not Clodia's only lover, just as he appears to have casual sexual relationships with other women. Political *amicitia* were not exclusive, and in extreme cases they might even involve conflicts of interest. In general, however, *amici* kept faith with their various *amici* and no one would expect a unique friendship. Catullus' commitment to Lesbia was therefore total, but not exclusive. He was expounding a theory of total love for Lesbia but not of total sexual faithfulness. She was number one to him, and he ought to have been number one to her. This is perhaps how we may interpret poem lxxii, which otherwise appears to make little sense when addressed to a married woman. 'You said one day you only knew [*nosse*] Catullus, Lesbia, / And you would not want to embrace Jove before me.' It was Catullus with whom Lesbia had a real relationship, with whom real 'knowledge' was shared. Her betrayal was of their friendship, not sexual loyalty. Hence he continued to love her physically, but could no longer 'wish her well' to the same degree as before.²⁸²

There was another crucial point that Catullus needed to convey. Real friendship or *amicitia*, unlike marriage, also required mutual commitment between two people of more or less equal status, and Catullus' commitment to Lesbia also hints at the truly revolutionary nature of his appeal to Lesbia. *Amicitia* was fundamentally a relationship between men and a relationship between equals; he was offering a man-to-man relationship to a woman. In a man's world, he was offering equality in a way that was manifestly different to the usual relationship, however, enlightened, between man and woman. He was speaking to her as an equal, as a true partner. He would act as a man to another man in loyalty, respect and expectations. When she defaulted, the language he used was the same as he used to other *amici*; that of lost of trust and lack of return for his own investment.²⁸³

It does not matter whether this equality was for many Roman men not quite as real as the ideal. The point is that equality was the aspect the Romans emphasised and evoked in the language of *amicitia* as opposed to *clientela*. That Catullus was using the language of *amicitia* to reveal the disparity between the real and the ideal is unlikely; it would mean that the poems about the relationship with Lesbia that use the terminology of *amicitia* would have been composed after the affair had turned sour – Catullus would not have the benefit of hindsight – and in any case, it is Clodia the woman who had the upper hand, not Catullus the man. It is also rather convoluted to suggest that Catullus was not only conceptually innovative in using this terminology to describe a relationship with a woman, but also at the same time denouncing as corrupt its practice between men. This is not to say that Catullus did not later notice the irony in his relationship: this *amica* failed him as did his *amicus*, Memmius. Where Catullus perhaps showed political naivety was in his belief that friendship with such as the Claudii ought to be longstanding and not intransigent.

Catullus therefore amply met the challenge of offering Lesbia something very different to marriage. The concept of *amicitia* offered Catullus five concepts that were important to his relationship with Clodia; firstly a sense of real, adult commitment to the relationship between them, secondly a relationship based on equality of the partners, not the subjugation of the woman. This relates to the third concept; he was offering a man-to-man relationship to Lesbia. Fourthly, it provided the idea of mutual benefits arising from the friendship, one of which could be political. And finally, it allowed total commitment, but without sexual exclusivity.

Catullus had good reason to expect Clodia to understand the full import of his use of the concept of *amicitia*. Clodia may well have been one of the first women to enter into a political *amicitia*; it is even possible that she entered into this type of political

‘friendship’ with Calpurnius Bestia in prosecuting Caelius. Bauman describes their link as ‘analogous to the all-male amicitia, or political friendship.’²⁸⁴ He explains their common cause: ‘Bestia was a candidate for the praetorship in 56 and needed to silence Caelius.... In Clodia’s case the desire for revenge was conjoined with an interest in promoting Bestia’s career, perhaps for the purpose of a liaison with yet another man younger than herself.’²⁸⁵ The fact Catullus addressed Clodia, arguably the leading political woman of her day, through a political metaphor, is therefore highly significant. This is a point sometimes forgotten: Clodia is not just any woman, any girlfriend, any wife.²⁸⁶

Something, however, went wrong between Clodia and Catullus, and instead of supporting the family through his poems, at some point he came to do the opposite. This was not just a messy break-up of a love affair; Catullus’ attacks on Lesbia extended to her family, and the attacks on her brother, particularly poem lxxix, need to be recognised as highly politicised. Firstly the attack on incest with his sister linked up with Cicero’s attacks on him for this, which originally formed part of the muck-raking at the *Bona Dea* trial, but kept cropping up in Cicero’s speeches. Secondly, the attacks suggested Clodius’ impotence and, worse still, depravity in that he had become a *fellator*, a highly degrading passive sexual activity; this was implied by the suggestion of an impure mouth and incest. There was also the hint that he was performed *cunnilingus* on Lesbia.²⁸⁷ Skinner points out that the repetition of *pulcher* would also imply the status of a *puer delicatus*, a passive male role, unsuited to a mature Roman politician.²⁸⁸ This also links to the reversal of sexual roles between Clodius and Clodia: he is effeminate, while she is excessively masculine; as brother and sister, they share the trait of *incontinentia*. Again the similarity with Cicero’s attacks politicises these jibes. Skinner has also pointed out that when Catullus referred to his clan *cum gente Catullus*, he was alluding to traditional rivalry

between the Claudii and Valerii, for example M Valerius Messalla Niger, consul in 61 and M Valerius Messalla Rufus, consul in 53.

It is also possible that there is another subtext to the poem; that Catullus had been threatened with court action. Skinner points out that the verb *reppererit* could be taken as a perfect subjunctive. So construed, it turns the *vendat* clause into the apodosis of a less vivid conditional: Lesbius would sell Catullus and Catullus' kindred, if he should have found his three kisses.²⁸⁹ How Clodius could come into a position to 'sell' Catullus and his family needs explaining. If Catullus was accused of some crime, he could lose his citizenship rights and property, with Clodius benefiting from sales of the latter, as in the case of Cicero. The three kisses might then refer to three others to support a prosecution. With another lover of Clodia, Caelius, ending up in the courts, this has to be a possibility.

It is also clear from this poem that Clodia rated her brother above her lover, so much so she would not bat an eyelid if he was sold off into slavery. The problem Catullus faced connects with the chart shown earlier in this chapter. While Catullus as a man should have been Clodia's superior if not her equal, in reality with such a woman as Clodia, this was not necessarily so. She was very much in control of this relationship in all respects, amorous and political; at some point, she no longer needed him, and when she chose, she stopped leading. If there had been any form of political benefits from the relationship, these ended along with their love affair. It is perhaps more understandable that Catullus ended up with a Ciceronian style hatred of Clodia if she rejected not just his affection and love, but also his *amicitia* and *beneficia*.

Endnotes

¹ Graham Greene (1962, 181) *The End of the Affair* Penguin.

² Fordyce (1961) in editing out much of Catullus' bawdiness, (eg poems vi, xvi, xxi) also left out many poems which deal with political figures, for example, xxviii about Piso and Memmius and xxviii, liv, lvii and xciv concerning Caesar and Mamurra.

³ So, for example, the fact that Arnold Schwarzenegger is married to a Kennedy is considered worth mentioning in news bulletins reporting on his running for political office, despite his being a Republican. (*Today* programme, Radio 4, September 2003).

⁴ Horace *Sat.* 1.2.28-36 gives the story of how Cato the Elder congratulated a young man coming out of a brothel.

⁵ One situation in which a young élite man might have had access to an unmarried girl of his own class would be where he was or became closely related to her by birth or marriage. So, for example, we know that Clodia Metelli married her stepbrother.

⁶ Edwards (1993, 22).

⁷ Cicero *Verr.* 2.1.104.35ff: 'She was Verres' mistress, and while he was praetor she controlled the civil law and private disputes, and was also dominant in maintenance contracts.' (Trans Bauman 1992, 66).

⁸ Such qualities, no doubt idealised from the start, were often chosen by Roman men on tombstones to commemorate the life of their dead wife in the second and first centuries BC, and several are cited by Gardner and Wiedemann (1991, 49f). The most famous example is the eulogy of 'Turia' (*Laudatio Turiae*), which includes events datable to the forties BC, although this woman may not have died until much later. Column 1, line 30: 'Why [should I mention] the domestic virtues? You were chaste, obedient, sociable, easy to get on with, [diligent] at your wool-making.' Cf *ILS* 8402 (second century BC), 'Here lies Marcus's wife Amymone, the best and most beautiful. Busy at her wool-working, devoted, modest, thrifty, chaste, happy to stay at home.'

⁹ Plutarch *Cato* 24.4 records the sexual activities in the house of Cato the Younger, a house that one would have expected to be an example of order not decadence: 'Cato's womenfolk seem to have been a total disaster. One sister was rumoured to be having an affair with Caesar. Cato's other sister Servilia behaved even more disgracefully. Having married Lucullus, one of the greatest Romans of the time, and borne him a child, she was thrown out of his house for her sexual indiscretions. Worst of all, not even Cato's own wife Atilia was free of such immorality. Although he had two children by her, he felt it necessary to divorce her for her shamelessness.' (Trans. Gardner/Wiedemann (1991, 58).

¹⁰ The likelihood of divorce and average life expectancy for both partners meant that there was an expectation of more than one marriage.

¹¹ Skinner (1997, 11). She also points out (p5): 'Because women of the senatorial class were implicated in the power networks of male kin, lurid tales of their adulteries could encapsulate corollary messages of political and social destabilization.'

¹² Ovid *Tristia* 2.207: *Carmen et error*. The poem is identified at *Tristia* 2.211-12.

¹³ The name is possibly corrupt; Mynor's Oxford text (1985 reprint) gives the spelling as Ipsitilla.

¹⁴ While the manuscripts agree on the letters (*a mean a* (O); *a me an a* (GRBVen)), the name 'Ameana' is not otherwise known, and has been variously amended.

¹⁵ Neudling (1955, 87).

¹⁶ Horace (*Sat.* 1.5.37) calls Formiae, in South Latium, *urbs Mamurrarum*.

¹⁷ Dickey (2002, 150) asserts that 'The feminine address *amica*...really means 'girlfriend' and is used only by men to women they love.' Wray (2001, 70) disagrees, arguing that *amica* was not a complimentary term for a girlfriend. The word also carries an implication of payment for services rendered.

¹⁸ Skinner (1979b, 110). While I mostly agree with Skinner that Ameana is (p112) 'a recognisable example of that perennial object of ridicule, the sexually available but unattractive female scorned by the fastidious male', Catullus' depiction of her is complicated by his comment that the Province (Cisalpine Gaul?) calls her beautiful (*ten Provincia narrat esse bellam* xliii 6) which undermines his insistence on her being ugly. She is not quite as Skinner puts it: 'pathetically unappealing and pathetically unaware of it' (p110). It is likely that this attack on her looks and her availability for hire is part of his attack on Mamurra. Skinner may also be taking Catullus too much at his word when she describes Mamurra as a 'small-town bankrupt' (p113). This denigration of Caesar's right hand man is surely part of the political invective, and not to be taken literally.

¹⁹ Wray (2001, 71).

²⁰ It is just possible that Aufillena is to be read into the *moecha putida* of Poem xlii, rather than Lesbia; Aufillena was from Cisalpine Gaul, which would agree with the Gallic reference Poem xlii 9: *catuli ore Gallicani* ('the face like a Gallican puppy's').

²¹ Neudling (1955, 17) points out that the name only occurs in eight inscriptions, and four of these come from Cisalpina, including two from Verona which mention a brother and sister, Aufillena and Aufillenus.

²² Cf xxiii 1: *Furi, cui neque servus est neque arca* and xxiv 8: *sed bello huic neque servus neque arca*.

²³ Cf xxi 2-3: *non harum modo sed quot aut fuerunt / antehac aut aliis erunt in annis* and xxiv 2-3: *non horum modo sed quot aut fuerunt / aut posthac aliis erunt in annis*.

²⁴ Neudling (1955, 155).

²⁵ While there is little evidence to establish the frequency of single sex relations in Rome as compared to Greece, the practice clearly did occur between men as there was a festival of boy prostitutes on April 25 each year. Even Cicero is portrayed as having a sexual relationship with his slave Tiro (Pliny *Ep.* 7.4).

²⁶ For example, Walters (1997, 31): 'In Roman society, the only culturally condoned male homosexual relationship was that between a sexually active adult citizen male and a sexually passive male, usually younger, who was a slave, an ex-slave, or a non-citizen.' Also Cantarella (1992, 100): 'Men and women without distinction – that was all right. But not free men.' The 'passive' role also included some acts which might appear active, such as cunnilingus and fellatio. Both these acts were considered inappropriate for adult free males to perform, and so are in effect also aspects of a passive role.

²⁷ Cf Williams (1995, 518): 'Cantarella [1992, 97f]...reasserts the distinction drawn by Veyne between male homosexual behaviour as a whole, which was never thought by Romans to be a Greek custom, and pederasty (in the specifically Greek meaning of romantic and sexual affairs with free-born youth), which was.'

²⁸ Lanata (1996, 12).

²⁹ Poem xxiv, 1f: *O qui flosculus es Iuventiorum, non horum modo sed quot aut fuerunt / aut posthac aliis erunt in annis* (O flower of the Juventii, not just of these but of all that have been or will be later in other years).

³⁰ Cicero *Planc.* 19; Neudling (1955, 94).

³¹ Ovid *Tristia* 2.427f: *multos vulgavit amores / in quibus ipse suum fassus adulterium est*.

³² Gleason (1990, 391).

³³ For example, Skinner (1997, 11) comments that at Rome, the rape or seduction of a young male citizen was *stuprum*, a criminal offence, possibly punishable under the *lex Sca(n)tinia*. Fantham (1991, 286) points out that law is first mentioned in two letters of M Caelius Rufus in 50 BC (Cicero *Fam.* 8.12.3 and 8.14.4).

³⁴ Quintilian *DM* 4.2.69.

³⁵ Paulus *Sent.* 5.4.14. (Trans. Walters 1997, 35).

³⁶ Williams (1995, 532).

³⁷ Fantham (1991, 284) points out: 'We have far more substantial evidence for the interest of Roman courts in dowry during the late Republic than of any concern to punish adultery or seduction as such.'

³⁸ Nappa (2001, 27) argues that Catullus creates a 'Catullus' whom contemporary Romans would find unsympathetic: 'Catullan self-description consists of detailing actions and attributes such as adultery (with Lesbia), Greek-style pederasty (with Juventius), and passive sexual activity (with Memmius). I would argue that in the first two, he misunderstands the Roman attitude to the active male and the reality about *stuprum*. In the third, he misses the humorous and figurative use of the passive role.'

³⁹ As Cantarella (1992, 126) commented: 'It would be hard to ask for a more explicit enunciation of what the Romans thought permissible in the line of homosexuality.' Discussions of male sexual freedom do not always acknowledge that there may have been such social restraints: for example, Fantham (1991, 271) lists 'recognized outlets' as 'his own slaves, brothel slaves and courtesans' commenting that '[i]n practise...there were...few restrictions on the man's immediate sexual satisfaction.'

⁴⁰ It is often said that Roman citizen men had open sexual access to their slaves, both male and female. The aspect that I question is whether force was actually as socially acceptable as is often argued; Cantarella ((1992, 101f) and Fantham (1991, 287f) both relate several incidents which involve owners making extraordinary efforts to please young slaves with whom they wish to have a relationship. The view that a degree of compliance was desirable would explain the special status given to boy concubines.

⁴¹ Walters (1997, 31).

⁴² Walters (1997, 32): 'Not all males were men, and therefore impenetrable: some males – the young and the unfree, for example – do not have the status of full men and are therefore characterized as potentially penetrable by other males.'

⁴³ Cicero *Cael.* 10: '*illud tempus aetatis quod ipsum sua sponte infirmum, aliorum autem libidine infestum est*.' Cited and translated by Skinner (1997, ch 5, note 11).

⁴⁴ Walters (1997, note 13): 'A standard ploy of Roman political rhetoric was to accuse one's opponent of having allowed himself to be sexually penetrated by other males when he was a youth.'

⁴⁵ Suetonius *Iul.* 49.4; Dio Cassius 43.21

⁴⁶ Edwards (1993, 84).

- ⁴⁷ Fantham (1991, 278) records how Fabius Maximus Eburnus, a former censor, first exiled his son to their country estate, and then sent two slaves to kill him. He was, however, successfully prosecuted for this action. (Orosius 5.16.18; Quintilian *D M* 3.17).
- ⁴⁸ Cantarella (1992, 98).
- ⁴⁹ Another aspect difficult to quantify in its effect was the freeing of slaves. While in many respects ex-slaves enjoyed full citizenship rights, it was socially acceptable for a former master to expect continued sexual access that involved the ex-slave continuing to act in a passive role, although now no longer as a slave.
- ⁵⁰ This apparently simple poem is full of ambiguity, not necessarily intended by Catullus. The names of the characters all appear in other poems, either in masculine or feminine form, often in negative contexts. It is possible that Catullus is being ironic here, and *fraternum...sodalicium* (v4) hints at incest, which Catullus elsewhere consistently condemns (eg poem cxi, about an Aufillena and an uncle). Does *perspecta* carry a meaning of 'seen through' as well as 'proven'; was Caelius not a true friend? What is clear, however, is firstly that Catullus does not take the opportunity to castigate Aufillenus for being a passive partner, and secondly that Caelius, Catullus' rival, is probably not Caelius Rufus, lover of Clodia, as he was not from Verona.
- ⁵¹ Clarke (1998, 38). The gemstone is in the Royal Coin Cabinet, Leiden, inv. 1948.
- ⁵² Parker (1997, 57).
- ⁵³ Butrica, (2004). *BMCR* 2004.01.03, reviewing Clarke (2003) *Roman Sex 100BC - AD 250*.
- ⁵⁴ Butrica (2004) *BMCR* 2004.01.03.
- ⁵⁵ Suetonius *Iul*, 52.3; Cicero *Dom.* 1139: *contra fas et inter viros saepe mulier et inter mulieres vir* ('contrary to what is right, often both a women among men and a man among women').
- ⁵⁶ Hallett (1996, 331).
- ⁵⁷ Cf Cantarella (1992, 98): 'In Greece, as we know, anyone who loved a boy had to court him, flatter him, prove his love for him, persuade him of the seriousness of his intentions. For a Roman, all of this would show a lack of virility.'
- ⁵⁸ Hallett/Skinner (1997, 3).
- ⁵⁹ Parker (1997, 57). Likewise the status of the passive partner is too often ignored, and this is an issue with Lesbia's position on Parker's Teratogenic grid; Lesbia, although passive as a woman and therefore powerless in one sense, has greater power as a rich Roman aristocratic woman than many citizen active males. This scenario is explored further later in this chapter. See also my comment above on Manlius's concubine who loses status by becoming an active male.
- ⁶⁰ Cf Cantarella (1992, 128): 'The one new element in his poetry is his romantic psychological attitude, and his infringement of the rule whereby the beloved boy was supposed to be a slave.'
- ⁶¹ Wray (2001, 208). Cf Edwards (1993, 96): 'Élite Romans of the late republic and early principate had to perform a balancing act. To be as coarse and simple as the Romans of earlier days were believed to have been was to invite ridicule. A similar fate lay in store for those who were over-cultivated.'
- ⁶² Edwards (1993, 77).
- ⁶³ There was even a masculine/feminine divide in literature and oratory; elegy may be considered 'feminine' relative to 'masculine' epic; the Attic style was thought 'masculine' and the Asiatic 'feminine'. Edwards (1993, 93, note 97) points out that Quintilian *Inst.* 2.5.10-11 'likens the 'unnatural' allure of the florid style to that of a castrated youth.'
- ⁶⁴ Apuleius *Apol.* 10: *quamquam sit iambicus, tamen improbarim*.
- ⁶⁵ While he never accuses Juventius of accepting payment, he emphasises Furius' lack of funds in attempting to dissuade Juventius, and he comments on Aurelius' propensity to make Juventius 'hunger and thirst', presumable with some implication that this will be for money: Poem xxiii, 1: *Furi, cui neque servus est neque arca...* Poem xxi, 1f: *quod esurire/ a temet puer et sitire discet*.'
- ⁶⁶ Edwards (1997, 68).
- ⁶⁷ That *infamia* caused by male prostitution could lead to actual political penalty is suggested by the *Tabula Heraclensis*, referring to local government rulings and probably contemporary to Catullus.
- ⁶⁸ Edwards (1997, 71).
- ⁶⁹ Hallett (1996, 323f) points out that Martial also articulates 'this phallic definition of sexually charged epigram.' He differs from Catullus, however, in his treatment and complexity; Martial's reader is assigned the position of a wife while the poems have the phallic power of a husband. Catullus' ideal reader is someone sophisticated enough to appreciate his style of verse, and yet retain their active role as he, the poet maintains

his. The passive role, as Hallett explains (1996, 329), 'is reserved for inadequate, insufficiently appreciative readers like Furius and Aurelius.'

⁷⁰ Freud (1986, 203-4) *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*. Cited by Bennett and Royle (1999).

⁷¹ So for example Veyne (1988, 59): 'There is no reason other than habit for linking this poetic sparrow [ie of poems ii and iii] to Lesbia.' Cf Dixon (2001, 137): 'Constructing the narrative of a love-affair...involves...ignoring poems to *other* named love-objects, and assuming that poems on an anonymous 'girl' (*puella*) must really be to or about Lesbia.'

⁷² Ovid *Tristia* 2.427f. Compare also Propertius II.34.87f: *Haec quoque lascivi cantarunt scripta Catulli, / Lesbia quis ipsa notior est Helena* ('This too the writings of lustful Catullus sang, which made Lesbia more notorious than Helen.')

⁷³ There are many interpretations as to the meaning of *unguentum*; for example, vaginal secretions (Littman 1977) or anal lubricant (Hallett 1978). Recently, Wray has suggested poetry inspired by Lesbia, citing the request of Philodemus (*Epigr.* 27 Sider) to a woman for a song: 'strum me some myrrh with your delicate hands.'

⁷⁴ Lxxxvi: *Lesbia formosa est, quae cum pulcherrima tota est, / tum omnibus una omnis surripuit veneres* ('Now Lesbia's beautiful, wholly most lovely, and alone / She has robbed them all of their charms.' Trans. Lee 1991).

⁷⁵ I disagree with James' general comment (2003, 16) on all the *puellae* of elegy that, 'The lover-poet must compose careful persuasion, but the *puella* may simply answer yes, or... no.' The appeal of such poems would surely be in the requirement for careful unravelling of allusion, tone and metaphor by the girlfriend before she is in a position to decide yes or no.

⁷⁶ Catullus takes the role of Sappho in this poem, but this is not a simple identification with a conventional female role, as Sappho was also admiring a woman.

⁷⁷ The virgin quality of the flower 'raped' by the plough is further emphasised by the use of *pratum* 'meadow' rather than *arva* 'ploughland'.

⁷⁸ Cf poems viii and cvii mentioned above.

⁷⁹ Poem lxviii, 146: *ipsius ex ipso dempta viri gremio* ('taken from the very lap of her very husband').

⁸⁰ Poem lxviii, 159-160 *et longe ante omnes mihi quae me carior ipso est; / Lux mea, qua viva vivere dulce mihi est* ('And she beyond all, far dearer to me than my own self, / My light, whose life makes living sweet for me.' Trans Lee 1991)

⁸¹ Poem lxviii, 71: *quo mea se molli candida diva pede / intulit et trito fulgentem in limine plantam / innexa arguta constituit solea* ('Where my radiant goddess with soft step / Drew near and rested a dazzling foot on the worn sill' Trans Lee 1991).

⁸² Poem lxxxiii: *Lesbia mi praesente viro mala plurima dicit* ('When her husband's there, Lesbia says many bad things against me').

⁸³ Khan (1967c, 34-7).

⁸⁴ Miller (1994, 108). Cf Skinner (1997, 131) who points out the similarity of language expressing the sense of personal betrayal in Ariadne's lament (lxiv, 132-201).

⁸⁵ Skinner (1997, 131) speaks of 'unmanly weakness of will' and subjection to obsessive lust in, for example, poem lxxvi.

⁸⁶ Poem lxx also relates to the role reversal mentioned above; in Callimachus' epigram 11, it is the man Callignotus, who swears to his Ionis, and whose faith is suspect.

⁸⁷ Poem lxxvi, 3: *nec sanctam violasse fidem nec foedere in ullo*.

⁸⁸ Martial mentions *lumina* in connection with a love object (11.29.3): 'cum me murem, cum me tua lumina dicis' ('when you call me your mouse or your eyes'). Also cf Apuleius *Met.* 5.13.

⁸⁹ Read in the context of other poems dealing with similar themes, it is highly likely that this poem does relate to his love affair with Lesbia; the case is therefore not quite as Quinn says (1970 xvi): 'Nothing...that we can point to in the text connects Poem 85 with the Lesbia affair.'

⁹⁰ Poem lxxvi, 10: *excrucies*; 12: *miser*; 20: *pestem perniciemque*; 25: *taetrum morbum*.

⁹¹ Commager (1965, 97).

⁹² Poem civ, 1: *credis me potuisse meae maledicere vitae* ('do you believe I could have cursed my life?').

⁹³ Wray (2001, 79).

⁹⁴ Scott (1969, 172).

⁹⁵ Miller (1994, 112).

⁹⁶ Veyne (1988, 59); Apuleius (*Apol.* 10): *eadem opera accusant C Catullum quod Lesbiam pro Clodia nominat.*

⁹⁷ Cicero *Att.* i.16.10: *pulcellus puer*; *Att.* ii.22.1: *pulcellum nostrum*; *In Clod. Et Cur.* Fr. 25: *sed credo postquam speculum tibi adlatum est, longe te a pulcris abesse sensisti.*

⁹⁸ Charges of incest: with all/other sisters: Cicero *Mil.* 73; *Har. Resp.* 42, 59; *Sest.* 16; *Fam.* I.9.15. With Clodia Metelli: *Cael.* 13.32, 15.36, 32.78; *Piso* 12.28; *Sest.* 7.16. Cf Plutarch *Cic.* 29; *Luc.* 34.1, 38.1.

⁹⁹ Quinn (1972a, 131).

¹⁰⁰ While Caecilia Metella, daughter of Balaricus (cos 123), is often given by secondary sources as his wife, there is no evidence to support such an assumption.

¹⁰¹ To save confusion, in this discussion of the family, I shall refer to Clodius by his *praenomen* Publius.

¹⁰² Cicero *Mil.* 24. Hillard (1973, 508) points out that Cicero is a hostile source, and argues for the possibility of 52 being the real *suo anno* for Clodius; the exceptional delay of the elections of 53 explains Clodius' possible earlier eligibility. Tatum (1999, 227) supports this.

¹⁰³ Badian (1964, 140-56) sets out the case for patricians having a two years advantage, and this is accepted by Wiseman (1985, 22) who argues for the later birth dates. This privilege was not available of course to Clodius once he had become a plebeian.

¹⁰⁴ Cicero *Cael.* 36.

¹⁰⁵ Plutarch *Cic.* 29 records the fact that Clodia Luculli was Clodius' youngest sister.

¹⁰⁶ Given the proximity of surviving children in an age of high infant mortality, it is possible that multiple births may be a solution to the apparently high number of children in a relatively short space of time. Modern statistics give one in a hundred for twins, and a higher incidence for women over 35.

¹⁰⁷ As Hillard points out (1973, note 18), Appius (*pater*) began his senatorial career in about 99 BC, and so it is possible he married about the same time.

¹⁰⁸ 87 BC is probably the last possible date for her birth as her father left Rome in that year and subsequently was expelled from the senate.

¹⁰⁹ Plutarch (*Cic.* 29) names the three sisters and their husbands. He calls Clodia Marci, 'Tertia', but the significance of this is unclear as she was not the 'third' daughter at least of those surviving long enough to be mentioned. We do not know, therefore, for sure who was the eldest daughter; I agree with Hillard (1973, 510) that the relative ages are far from being 'clearly indicated by the order of names in Plutarch' as McDermott (1970b, 40) argued. Tatum (1999, 34f) gives Hillard's reconstruction with Clodia Metelli as the eldest sister, but this is not a conclusion drawn by Hillard. Rather he says (1973, 514): 'It is just possible then that Clodia Metelli was older than Clodia Tertia though the positive argument for this is slight.'

¹¹⁰ Varro *RR* III 16.1-2 says she was married after her father's death in 76BC. Plutarch gives the reason for divorce (*Luc.* 34.1, 38.1, *Cic.* 29.1, *Caes.* 10.5).

¹¹¹ He is mentioned as waiting for a triumph at the end of 63 in Italy, and Cicero mentions his death in a letter in July 61 (*Att.* 1.16.10).

¹¹² Plut. *Cic.* 29. (Trans: Penguin Classics).

¹¹³ Varro *RR* III 16.1-2. *nam cum pauper cum duobus fratribus et duabus sororibus essem relictus, quarum alteram sine dote dedi Lucullo.* As to the reality of Appius being *pauper*, this is to be taken in relative terms for what might seem appropriate for such an illustrious patrician family, with three senatorial careers to finance. Hillard (1973, 506) points out that his father had died before reaping the benefits of his provincial command, particularly important in his case due to his earlier exile. (For exile, see *Cic. Dom.* 83-4). In this context, some personal sacrifice (honey wine only for the guests) while keeping up appearances seems appropriate. Tatum (1999, 36) perhaps goes a little too far when he dismisses the comment as a 'humorous fiction', commenting that 'poverty, even relative poverty by the standards of his class,' was not a pressure for Claudius.

¹¹⁴ Eg Wiseman (1985, 23).

¹¹⁵ Marriage by the less common form of *confarreatio* would mean she would have passed into the *potestas* of her husband. With the more common form of marriage *sine manu*, however, she would still have remained under Appius' authority rather than her husband's.

¹¹⁶ Hallett (1984, 67) points out the continuing link between a married woman and her natal family: 'the penchant for likening a woman's temperament and character to that of her father and brothers coincides with the economic, political, and social functions women continued to perform as representatives of their natal family after marriage.'

- ¹¹⁷ *Quarum* would refer to 'sisters': he was left in poverty with two sisters, the other (*alteram*) of which he gave to Lucullus. This strains the Latin, admittedly, but so does only mentioning two sisters, one of whom is quickly taken off his hands.
- ¹¹⁸ It is otherwise a very unusual feature to have three such aristocratic daughters only marrying once.
- ¹¹⁹ Plutarch's comments on the husbands of all three daughters is very much set in the context of the sixties: although married in the seventies, the evidence that Lucullus gave was at the Bona Dea trial in 62, and related to events that led to his divorce of the youngest sister in 66. Cicero himself gave evidence, Plutarch says, because of his wife's jealousy and suspicions of Clodia's intentions on Cicero in that year. As Plutarch clarifies that it was Clodia Metelli who gave Clodius a bad name in the same section it seems reasonable to identify this Clodia with her.
- ¹²⁰ Cicero *Cael.* 49 describes Clodia as a widow.
- ¹²¹ Cicero *Fam.* 5.2.6.
- ¹²² Cicero *Att.* 4.3.4; *Fam.* 5.3.1; *Dom.* 7, 87; *Har. Resp.* 45; *Cael.* 60.
- ¹²³ Shackleton Bailey (1977, 148-9); Wiseman (1971).
- ¹²⁴ Wiseman (1985, 18 note 4).
- ¹²⁵ Plutarch *Cic.* 29. Plutarch as a source, however, is not completely reliable. Skinner (1983, 277) points out that Cicero himself contradicts this idea, and suggests that the real reason was due to mutual political disagreements. (*Att.* 1.13.3; 1.14.5; 1.16.1-2).
- ¹²⁶ Cicero *Att.* 2.1.4-5.
- ¹²⁷ Burl (2004, 52) argues against this; as Metellus went north initially to prevent Catiline reaching the Alps, 'on a campaign that promised to be bloody it is improbable that he took his wife with him.' In the event, however, Catiline was defeated in January, near Florence by the army under Antonius. As mentioned in chapter 2, it is also possible that wives made visits to their absent husbands.
- ¹²⁸ Cicero (*Att.* 2.9.1; 12.2; 14.1; 22.5; 23.3).
- ¹²⁹ Similarly Catullus wrote to his friend, Licinius Calvus, either as Licinius (poem l 1) or Calvus (xiv 2).
- ¹³⁰ Eliminating this Caelius from the equation, something that Catullus may have intended by his clearly pointing out the Veronese background to this poem, points out the lack of argument by Wiseman against Caelius of lviii being Caelius Rufus (1974, 106f). As he supposes two sisters of Clodius had affairs with men called Rufus, it seems no less of a coincidence to suppose two Caelii in Catullus' poems, especially when one is labelled a co-lover of Lesbia and the other a Veronese youth in love with another man.
- ¹³¹ Lee (1991, 172) argues that the Rufus of lxix and lxxvii were one and the same man. In his note on poem lxxvii, he says: 'This must be the Rufus of lxix. The tone resembles the bitter disillusion of lxxiii and there is a similar frequency of elision. In lines 3-6 *misero, eripuisti, pestis, subrepsti* are echoed from lxxvi 19-21.'
- ¹³² Wiseman (1974, 106f).
- ¹³³ Austin (1960, viif).
- ¹³⁴ Dane (1968, 130).
- ¹³⁵ Wiseman (1985, 2).
- ¹³⁶ Aspects of Clodia Metelli that are mentioned in the sources, but are not elements of Catullus' portrayal include: her suspected murder of his husband, probably the invention of Cicero (*Cael.* 34); her acquisitiveness and corresponding generosity; and her statue of Venus.
- ¹³⁷ Cicero *Att.* ii.12.2.
- ¹³⁸ Cicero *Cael.* 13.5 *mulier non solum nobilis verum etiam nota* ('a woman not only of noble birth but also well-known').
- ¹³⁹ Propertius 11. 34.87f: *Lesbia quis ipsa notior est Helena*.
- ¹⁴⁰ Cicero (Schol. Bob. 135St; *Cael.* 64) calls her an experienced writer for the stage (*vetus et plurimarum fabularum poetria*). He also describes the story about the poison and the rendezvous at the Senian baths as a play without a proper plot or ending (*velut haec tota fabella veteris et plurimarum fabularum poetriae quam est sine argumento, quam nullam invenire exitum potest!...fabella, in quo cum clauula non invenitur*). He connects her literary activity with insinuations of incest with Clodius when he comments that Clodius knew all his sister's interludes (*Sest.* 116: *qui omnia sororis embolia novit*). *Embolia* were balletic interludes, performed between acts or plays by dancing girls, probably written by Clodia rather than danced by her.
- ¹⁴¹ The echo of Theocritus at xxxvi 12-14 (also, as Wray points out, reflected in lxiv 96) is of the verse of a female singer's hymn to Aphrodite (Theocritus *Idyll* 15.100), translated by Wray as 'Lady who best lovest Golgi and Idalium'. Both poems, Wray (2001, 78) points out, 'prominently feature female speakers as connoisseurs passing aesthetic judgement in specialized terms of approbation.'

¹⁴² Cicero *Cael.* 1.

¹⁴³ Cf Lefkowitz (1981, 34): 'Note that both Cicero's Clodia and Catullus' Lesbia (whether or not they are in fact the same person) in these invectives take on a plurality of men *outside* their homes.'

¹⁴⁴ Rankin (1969, 503).

¹⁴⁵ Cicero *Cael.* 18.

¹⁴⁶ Plutarch *Cic.* 29.2: *quadrantaria Clytemnestra*.

¹⁴⁷ Rankin (1969, 504); 'We may infer from this reference [the *pyxis* episode] together with the incident of the *quadrantes* that Clodia, even before the *Pro Caelio*, was a figure of fun and contempt as well as being a dominant beauty.'

¹⁴⁸ Poems lxxxiii and xcii.

¹⁴⁹ Poem xi.

¹⁵⁰ Poem civ.

¹⁵¹ Edwards (1993, 46).

¹⁵² Cicero *Qf* ii. 3.2.

¹⁵³ Livy 39.5-40.12.

¹⁵⁴ Livy 10.23.1-10.

¹⁵⁵ Livy 22.52.7, 54.2-4.

¹⁵⁶ Scullard, H.H. (1973) *Roman Politics 220-150 BC*. Oxford, p113. Cited by Bauman (1992, 33).

¹⁵⁷ Skinner (1997, 9): 'Whereas Greek custom discouraged women's presence in public space, élite Roman families of the late Republic exploited it as yet another occasion for competitive advertisement; ostentatious displays of wealth by noblewomen testified to past military achievements of male kin.'

¹⁵⁸ Nepos fr. 1.1-2. An example of her emotive language regarding the tribunate: 'But if you cannot by dissuaded, stand for the tribunate when I am dead.' Trans Bauman (1992, 42). The unexpected viewpoint that Cornelia adopted has led to doubts about the authenticity of this letter.

¹⁵⁹ These included Diophanes of Mytilene and Blossius of Cumae.

¹⁶⁰ Pliny *NH* 34.31.

¹⁶¹ Bauman (1992, 47).

¹⁶² Bauman (1992, 60).

¹⁶³ Bauman (1992, 65).

¹⁶⁴ Hillard (1989, 166) argues that 'the projected images of 'powerful' women were aimed at damaging male credibility and that...the women defamed might be considered legitimately incidental victims.' Dixon (1983) gives a useful counter-argument, for example, on women taking part in court proceedings (p101): 'They [élite women] could be attacked as a means of reaching their male relations, but the examples we have tend to show them in a stronger light, as players in the game of political give and take.'

¹⁶⁵ Boyd (1987, 185).

¹⁶⁶ Sallust *Cat.* 23.

¹⁶⁷ *CIL* XI, 6721 Fulvia (3-5, 14), Lucius (13, 14) and Octavian (7).

¹⁶⁸ Babcock (1965, 19f).

¹⁶⁹ Cicero *Att.* 5.4, 6.1.

¹⁷⁰ Cicero *Att.* 15.11.

¹⁷¹ Cicero *Brut.* 1.18.

¹⁷² Cicero *Verr.* 2.5.34.

¹⁷³ Porcia, for example, was present at the meeting to discuss Brutus' province in June 44 mentioned above.

¹⁷⁴ Suet *Aug.* 74.2; *Schol. Bob.* 89. 26ff. St.

¹⁷⁵ Maesia was called Androgyne according to Valerius Maximus for pleading in her own defence, while Afrania, who survived until the forties BC and was the wife of a senator, became renown for pleading her own cases. (Val. Max. 8.3.2).

¹⁷⁶ Cf Dixon (1983, 101): 'Certainly women often appeared as witnesses – itself a public declaration, in a trial of political moment, of alignment, and a way of binding the litigant concerned in a future relationship.'

¹⁷⁷ Skinner (1997, 10).

¹⁷⁸ Dixon (2001, 102).

¹⁷⁹ Skinner (1997, 10).

¹⁸⁰ Carp (1981, 350f): 'Cicero had been scouting prospects for a third [husband] only to discover that his wife and daughter had preempted him, choosing a candidate...notorious for his political radicalism and private

profligacy.... The marriage occasioned a written *apologia* to Appius in which Cicero disclaimed responsibility for the match.'

¹⁸¹ Dixon (1983, 94).

¹⁸² Dixon (1983, 109).

¹⁸³ Cf Dixon (2001, 152): 'The collapsing of the political and sexual in the case of women makes it particularly difficult for us to disentangle factual elements.'

¹⁸⁴ Hillard (1989, 167;166) comments that, 'the projected images of 'powerful' women were aimed at damaging male credibility,' and that this 'must have served to discourage women of ability from being seen to exercise influence, and must have acted as a sophisticated mechanism, above, and outside the formal social structure, for disqualifying women from a real political role.'

¹⁸⁵ Cf Dixon (2001, 33): 'It is notable that women who appear in the historical narratives as transgressing in one way for example by intruding in the masculine political sphere, are usually credited with sexual transgressions as well.'

¹⁸⁶ Dixon (2001, 151).

¹⁸⁷ Edwards (1993, 34f).

¹⁸⁸ Hallett (1989, 59).

¹⁸⁹ Hallett (1989, 64f) cites Cicero *De Or.* 2.277 and Juvenal *Sat.* 2.54-6.

¹⁹⁰ Fantham (1991, 276). Valerius Maximus *De Pudicitia* vi 1 (Lucretia: *cuius virilis animus maligno errore Fortunae muliebri corpus sortitus est*); vi 2 (Verginius: *plebeii generis, sed patricii vir spiritus*).

¹⁹¹ Viewpoint is of course key in deciding where that line fell. Porcia, Cato's daughter and Brutus' wife is generally praised for her strength of mind and desire to support Brutus (Plutarch *Brut.* 13), while Fulvia, Antony's wife, is criticised for wanting to do more than housework (Plutarch *Ant.* 10.2). As Hallett (1989, 67) points out, this often relates to whether a male relative can take credit for the manly qualities of the woman; Porcia's strength of mind echoes and enhances this quality in her father.

¹⁹² Bauman (1992, 69).

¹⁹³ Wiseman (1985, 17f). He continues: 'her father's *atrium* must have been crowded like a museum with the portrait busts of consuls, censors, dictators and *triumphatores*.'

¹⁹⁴ Taylor (1949, 26).

¹⁹⁵ Wiseman (1971, 103) paraphrasing Plutarch *Sulla* 6.10.

¹⁹⁶ Taylor (1949, 26).

¹⁹⁷ Callimachus wrote the poem shortly after the occasion in 246 BC, and it became part of *Aitia* Book iv.

¹⁹⁸ Cicero *Fam.* 5.2.6.

¹⁹⁹ Cicero *Att.* 2.1.5; Skinner (1983, 278f).

²⁰⁰ Skinner (1983, 279).

²⁰¹ Cicero *Att.* 2.1.4-5: '*ea est enim seditiosa, ea cum viro bellum gerit.*'; *Cael.* 60.

²⁰² Cicero *Cael.* 60.

²⁰³ Cicero *Att.* 2.9.1.

²⁰⁴ Gruen (1974, 58). He argues (p59): 'The *gens* was still an object of loyalty, the marriage alliance was still a political act. But in the more volatile atmosphere of the late Republic, the marriage alliance often served (however unintentionally) to undermine rather than to consolidate the political unity of the *gens*.'

²⁰⁵ It is just possible that the death of Metellus occurring at about the same time as Clodius' transfer to the plebs may suggest a reason for the extraordinary adoption of the plebeian form of Claudia by the three sisters. As patrician ladies, it was probable that they married through the process of *confarreatio*, and so would have passed into the power (*manus*) of their husbands and his family. Plebeian women, however, could marry *sine manu*, that is, remaining in the power of their own family. Did the sisters adopt the plebeian style of their name with Clodius to announce their independence from their marital families? For Clodia Metelli, this adoption of plebeian status, whether official or not, would have been useful both in casting off any control from Metellus' family and in seeking a new marriage *sine manu*. As Appius was alive well into the fifties (he was consul in 54), it is unlikely that they would have been under the responsibility of the youngest brother, Clodius and so changing their name for this reason.

²⁰⁶ Dixon (2001, 34).

²⁰⁷ Plutarch 32. As mentioned above, however, Plutarch's account is probably not an accurate reflection of events.

²⁰⁸ Cicero *Cael.* 31, 52.

²⁰⁹ Dio 46.18.4.

²¹⁰ Dixon (2001, 101).

²¹¹ Cf Dixon (2001, 101): 'It is difficult to distinguish the finer points of the exchange and the sexual protocol, but it remains clear that the integration of women in the social/political relationships which bound élite men is expressed also in their material and financial exchanges of which loans were an important element.'

²¹² Cicero *Cael.* 32, 78.

²¹³ Rankin (1969, 505).

²¹⁴ Wiseman puts his political significance at a lower level, as being Clodius' agent in the street, doing the dirty work of violence and intimidation. But he himself points out that this 'heavy man' image is not accurate; Cloelius drafted legislation for Clodius (*scriba*: Asc. 33C; *scriptor legum*: Cic. *dom.* 47f, 83, 129; *Sest.* 133) and was an administrator of the *lex frumentaria* (Cic. *dom.* 25f) until no less a man than Pompey took over (Cic. *Att.* 4.1.6).

²¹⁵ Cf Gruen's (1974, 311) comment on the numerous attacks on the triumvirs' *amici* after 59: 'As always, the technique [judicial attacks] afforded a most useful means of puncturing the prestige of one's *inimici*.'

²¹⁶ Dixon (1983, 100).

²¹⁷ Cicero *Cael.* 32, 78 (trans: Penguin 1969).

²¹⁸ Wiseman (1985, 65) on his renting Clodius' apartment and becoming Clodia's lover: 'The move marked Caelius' arrival as a serious politician.' He points out that Cicero called it a turning point in his life. (Cicero *Cael.* 75).

²¹⁹ Wiseman (1985, 67) gives the following hypothesis: 'that he was working secretly for Ptolemy (therefore, in effect, in Pompey's interests), and that when this became known to Clodius and his sister it caused a sudden violent breaking-off of relations at both the political and the personal level.'

²²⁰ Taylor (1949, 98).

²²¹ Gruen (1974, 309).

²²² Bauman (1992, 70).

²²³ Bauman (1992, 70f).

²²⁴ Bauman (1992, 72).

²²⁵ Bauman (1992, 71).

²²⁶ Wiseman (1985, 49).

²²⁷ Bauman (1992, 237 note 40).

²²⁸ Rankin (1969, 506).

²²⁹ Cicero *Cael.* 71. Austin (1960, 134) points out that the link with the nickname is only conjecture.

²³⁰ Cicero *Qf* 2.13.2: *Pola Servius, ad accusationem veniat: nam noster Caelius valde oppugnatur a gente Clodia.*

²³¹ In a letter of 45 BC (*Att.* 12.42.2), Cicero expresses an interest in buying her property besides the Tiber. Atticus (*Att.* 12.40.4) suggests Lentulus Spinther as being someone who might help him in this, but Cicero does not rate him. Skinner (1983, 283, note 26) comments: 'That Atticus could only suggest talking to Spinther...implies that no closer male connection was available.'

²³² Edwards (1993, 48): 'But drawing attention to a man's disruptive potential by highlighting his propensity for seducing other men's wives also emphasised his power. The sexual power of Clodius, his suspected ability to win the wife of Caesar, might be read as potency of his political influence, as well as its corrupt nature.'

²³³ Edwards (1993, 47f).

²³⁴ Cornell (1982, 205).

²³⁵ Wiseman (1985, 36f) argues that professional theatre *claqueurs* was probably used by Clodius: 'The chanting of Clodius' *operae*...was surely the work of theatre *factions*, whose antiphonal technique is amply attested.'

²³⁶ Wiseman (1985, 37): 'among the insults chanted at Pompey were two that appear also in an epigram of Calvus.' Plutarch *Pomp.* 48.7. '*Magnus, quem metuunt omnes, digito caput uno scalpit; quid credas hunc sibi velle? Virum.*' The point of this epigram being that Pompey wants a citizen adult male (*vir*) to penetrate, which means humiliation for that party.

²³⁷ Tatum (1999, 84).

²³⁸ Fulvia, as argued by Babcock (1986, 3f), would have been the heiress of two noble families, the Fulvii, through her father Fulvius Bambalio and the Sempronii Tuditani, through her mother, and possibly also the step-daughter of L Licinius Murena, the consul of 62.

²³⁹ As mentioned earlier, Cicero wanted to buy her gardens near the Tiber. He also said that in 59 BC, just after Metellus' death, a family counsel took place at her villa at Solonium (*Att.* 2.9.1.) and three years later he describes her coming out of 'that house' (*Cael.* 60.25: *ex hac domo progressa*) implying that it was the house in which Metellus died. This was sited on the desirable Palatine.

²⁴⁰ Taylor (1949, 58).

²⁴¹ Tatum (1999, 144), comparing Catiline and Clodius, comments that the former was more popular in the Italian countryside while Clodius' popular base was almost wholly urban.

²⁴² Frank (1928, 22).

²⁴³ Skinner (1983, 280) discussing her role as shown in Cicero *Att.* 2.12.2: 'for Cicero names her in the same breath with Sex. Cloelius, one of his [Clodius] recognized associates.'

²⁴⁴ Skinner (1983, 281).

²⁴⁵ Skinner (1983, 281).

²⁴⁶ This broader view of Catullus' possible political involvement in addition to his absence from Rome in 57/6 and the fact that many poems are undatable may help explain a problem put by Wiseman: 'if Catullus had been the lover of such a very political lady as Clodia Metelli since 60 BC or before, one might expect political allusions to appear in the poems before 56.' Wiseman (1974, 108), cf Maas (1942, 80 note 6).

²⁴⁷ Plutarch *Luc.* 34; Dio xxxvi.17).

²⁴⁸ Mulroy (1988, 155f).

²⁴⁹ Plutarch, *Caesar* 9-10.

²⁵⁰ Clodius was described at this point as '*potentissimus homo*' (Schol. Bob. *In Clod. Et Cur.* Strangl 58.28).

Tatum (1999, 68) argues: 'Clodius' popularity with the *plebs* was not perhaps of so much concern to Caesar as the young man's position within the aristocracy.'

²⁵¹ Balsdon (1966, 65f) argues that Cicero's evidence against Clodius' alibi was clearly not held decisive by his contemporaries who acquitted Clodius. Cicero himself had approved of an incident in 69, when (p72) 'a jury mistrusted the word of those motivated by 'inimicitiae'.'

²⁵² Cicero *Att.* 1.16.5.

²⁵³ Wiseman (1968b, 297f) argues convincingly that it is more likely that Cicero is referring to Calvus than Crassus as sometimes suggested.

²⁵⁴ Cicero *Att.* 1.13.3.

²⁵⁵ Cicero *Cael.* 36.

²⁵⁶ Incidents included the contest over the legation to Alexandria to recognise the King. The argument over this meant he lost the opportunity to go on the legation to Tigranes of Armenia.

²⁵⁷ Appian *B.C.* 2.14.

²⁵⁸ Taylor (1949, 134) points out that Metellus Celer, Cato and one other stood out the longest in refusing to take an oath to adhere to Caesar's landbill.

²⁵⁹ Cicero *Att.* 2.12.2.

²⁶⁰ Dio 38.12.3; Tatum (1999, 112).

²⁶¹ Tatum (1999, 140).

²⁶² Tatum (1999, 145): 'The success of this action made him a genuine factor in Roman politics and nobody's lackey.'

²⁶³ Tatum (1999, 168). Tatum records his success: 'To all appearances, at least until December [58], the tribune was in complete control of the city. The *popularis* tribune was, for the moment, the champion of the urban *plebs* and of the princes of the senate.' (p174)

²⁶⁴ Cicero *Vat.* 41.

²⁶⁵ For the *legatio libera*, see Tatum (1999, 224f).

²⁶⁶ Asc. 28; Antony: Dio xlv, 35,4.

²⁶⁷ Tatum (1999, 111).

²⁶⁸ Babcock (1965, note 39).

²⁶⁹ Tatum (1999, 245).

²⁷⁰ Cicero *Att.* 4.15.4.

²⁷¹ Ross (1969, 80f) argues compellingly that the language of *amicitia* and associated concepts should be considered as the terminology of political alliance, and that Catullus uses this as a metaphor to describe his relationship with Lesbia. He follows Reitzenstein who first pointed out that 'the language Catullus uses for his affair with Lesbia is the (almost technical) terminology of the working party politics and political alliances at Rome.' (cited p83). Lyne (1980, 25f) argues against this, saying it should be considered primarily as the

language of aristocratic obligation. For Romans, however, 'aristocratic' alliances, as discussed in the introduction, were fundamentally political; it is impossible to separate the political aspect from other aspects of élite life as they were fundamentally interdependent. Cf Vinson (1992, 164): 'Such a polarized view of love and politics, of public and private life, is one that a Roman, and Catullus in particular, would find it difficult to share.' Similarly Dixon (2001, 102): 'Disentangling the material, social, political and moral elements of 'friendship' for élite Romans is ultimately an artificial exercise.'

²⁷² Cicero *fam.* 5.8.5: *has litteras velim existimes foederis habituras esse vim, non epistulae.*

²⁷³ Poem lxxii: *dilexi tum te non tantum ut vulgus amicam / sed pater ut gnatos diligit et generos.* Lyne (1980, 292, note 10) points out a similar idea in Ovid *Met.* 1.481: *saepe pater dixit: 'generum mihi, filia, debes* (Often her father said: 'Daughter, you owe me a son-in-law').

²⁷⁴ The following discussion perhaps answers Lyne's question (1980, 26): 'what could induce a romantic lover-poet to picture his relationship metaphorically in terms of the working of party politics?'

²⁷⁵ The following argument challenges the consensus suggested by Vinson (1992, 163): 'there seems to be a consensus that the relationship with Lesbia, as the poet envisioned it, embodies the qualities of a traditional Roman marriage.'

²⁷⁶ Vinson (1992, 165) suggests that 'Catullus' ultimate object in transferring the terms of institutional politics such as *foedus* and *amicitia* to the analogous sexual institution, marriage, would be to offer his assessment of contemporary marital mores.' She does not discuss the issues of using such terminology or the concept of marriage to a highly political, far-from-average, middle-aged widow.

²⁷⁷ Poem lxx 1-2. While this might seem to support Vinson's idea that Catullus described his relationship in terms of marriage, it is probable that this poem dates to a time when Lesbia was still married – why else would she not go through with marriage? There is also hyperbole in the mention of Jupiter and explicit, immediate lack of trust in Lesbia's words; marriage is something that Lesbia is not likely to go through with, nor does Catullus believe otherwise. It is still intriguing, however, to consider what effect Metellus' death had on the relationship.

²⁷⁸ Cf Rankin (1976b, 121): 'He has a fluidity and flexibility of mind which enables him to understand with sympathy, many different love-roles and attitudes. He is no narrow Puritan.'

²⁷⁹ This is the point that Vinson (1992, 173) misses when she argues that there is in Catullus' poetry 'the perception that marriage had become, to its shame, just another tool of the politician's trade.' Two of the three known marriages of the Clodia sisters ended with the death of their partners. While political alliances may have instigated these marriages, they were not subject to further manipulation. It is also questionable whether there is an indictment of marriage in Catullus' attack on *socer generque* in poem 29 as she suggests. Pompey's marriage to Julia was a love-match and only ended with her death in childbirth in 54.

²⁸⁰ Taylor (1949, 34).

²⁸¹ Earl (1967, 33). This was especially important after the tribunician laws of 139 and 137 which introduced the secret ballot in elections of magistrates and for trials before the people (excluding treason); the *patronus* had to trust his *amici* and *clientes* to vote in his favour.

²⁸² The distinction is also made in poem lxxvi 22-3 where Catullus says that he does not now ask for Lesbia to love him in return, *or* the impossible, that she be chaste.

²⁸³ Alfenus is attacked in poem xxx as *perfide* and one who betrays *fides*. In poem lxxiii, another poem about an untrue friend, Catullus uses words such as *bene velle*, *ingrata*, and *pious* and in poem xci, to Gellius, he uses *fides*, and *constans*. Cf Cicero who shrunk from the crime of appearing ungrateful to Pompey and so sided with him in the civil war (Cicero *Att.* 9.2A.2 *ingrati animi crimen horreo*).

²⁸⁴ Bauman (1992, 72).

²⁸⁵ Bauman (1992, 72).

²⁸⁶ Cf Vinson (1992, 166) in a paper considering *amicitia*: 'Power, or to be more precise, an imbalance of power, often characterized in terms of dominance and submission, is the hallmark of sexual relationships in antiquity...to be the active partner was to be normal, good, and above all male.' That the 'friendship' between Lesbia and Catullus reversed this norm is not discussed.

²⁸⁷ Cf Cicero's accusation against Cloelius being with Clodia 'with his head down' (*Dom.* 25, 83)

²⁸⁸ Skinner (1982, 200).

²⁸⁹ Skinner (1982, 199).

Chapter Four

THE EXPLICIT POLITICAL VOICE IN CATULLUS’ POEMS

In my introductory discussion of politics, I explored the particularly personal nature of Roman politics. My conclusion was that for Roman élite, which included the equestrian as well as senatorial order, politics was more a way of life than a career choice. For the Roman élite male, his whole life was affected by politics; from his secondary education concentrating on rhetoric to the assumption that he would seek political office after his military service, with the ultimate aim of achieving distinction to rival or, better still, surpass that of his ancestors. Political activities to a large extent governed his friendships and associates, and these relationships affected the way he voted. As a member of the senate, he had to uphold a reasonable level of personal morality to avoid being cast out by the censors. Those who wished to do damage to his reputation could also attack him through any personal failings he may have actually had, or may have been thought to have had. Personal enmity against him may also have been legitimately pursued in the political sphere, even to the detriment of the Roman state.

In the last chapter, I considered the possibilities open to women for taking a role in, or being affected by politics. I argued that it was acceptable for women to have fairly significant roles behind the scenes, lobbying husbands, family and other wives. Often wealthy in their own right, they also had clients and ‘friends’ whom they might have wished to support or seek support from. Effectively they were excluded only from actually holding office itself, just one part of political life. Too open an involvement, however, could lead to attacks on them, under the guise of accusations of sexual misconduct which

reflected badly on their male relations who should have contained what was viewed as their female lack of control (*incontinentia*). Alternatively, women could be the passive victims of political invective aimed directly at their male relatives or husbands. Women were also involved as passive objects in marriages that cemented *amicitiae* between their own and their future husbands' family. As they grew older and more experienced, there would have been greater opportunities for them to assert themselves beyond being mere pawns in these relationships.

The personal nature of politics also meant that genuine emotion, both of affection and enmity, could exist in relationships among the élite. As Epstein has shown, a unique aspect of Roman society, which would be completely unacceptable today, was the toleration of men exercising their personal hatred of others through political means, such as prosecutions or electioneering: 'Roman politicians who prosecuted their *inimicitiae* in office were tolerated by their own society, and because the peculiar nature of Roman politics provided such a fertile source of *inimicitiae*.'¹ What was also peculiar to the Romans was the way these were 'so pervasively and violently pursued.'² Catullus' invective needs to be set within this political context, and a high level of personal enmity must be considered as lying behind some of his attacks, which in no way diminishes their political intent.

Catullus' poetry includes references to people who range from the very top ranks of society, about whom our knowledge is considerable, to those of lesser positions about whom we know only what Catullus tells us. What is perhaps remarkable considering all the gaps in our knowledge of the higher orders of Rome at the time of Catullus, is how many of those portrayed can be at least tentatively identified as having a political role. Approximately sixty men are mentioned by Catullus, and of these over a third held office or played a major role in political life. Over half had some political role that we are aware

of; these high levels of political involvement would suggest that these should be considered conservative estimates. Table 1 shows the breakdown of these figures, excluding the group of unknowns with no apparent political context.³

Table 1

Name	Identification		Importance	
	+	Beyond reasonable doubt	*****	of highest importance
	+/=	A good possibility	****	very important
	=	A possibility	***	a key figure
	(+)	Unknown, but poem indicates a political status	**	holder of political office or equivalent
	[blank]	Unknown	*	minor figure/aspiring
Antius	(+)		*	
Arrius	+/=		**	
Caelius/Rufus	+/=		***	
Caesar	+		*****	
Calvus	+		***	
(Porcius) Cato	=		***	
Cicero	+		*****	
Cinna	+		**	
Clodius	+		*****	
Cominius	=		*	
Cornificius	+/=		**	
Egnatius			*?	
Fabullus			*?	
Fuficius	(+)		*	
Furius	=		*	
Gellius	=		**	
Hortalus	+/=		***	
Libo	(+)		*	
Mamurra	+		***	
Memmius	+/=		***	
Naso	(+)		*?	
Nonius	(+)		**	
Otho	(+)		*	
Piso	+/=		***	
Pollio	+		***	
Pollio's brother	+		*?	
Pompey	+		*****	
Sestius	(+)		**	
Socration	=		*	
Torquatus	+/=		**	
Vatinius	+		***	
(Alfenus) Varus	=		**	
Veranius			*?	

That Catullus includes political figures in his poetry does not of course automatically make his poems political. In this chapter, I shall consider the extent to which politics played a role in the poems about these men, and what political impact Catullus may have achieved through the poems. This discussion builds on the exploration of the political element in Catullus' affair with Lesbia discussed in the last chapter. I shall deal first with the major figures of Caesar, Pompey, and Mamurra. A brief overview of the poems, giving a sense of their poetic context, is followed by more detailed analysis of each poem examining how Catullus may have achieved his effects and what their impact might have been on the two members of the triumvirate. The next section will deal with the other major political figures that Catullus attacked – Memmius, Piso and Vatinius – and the one man he apparently praised, Cicero. Less important figures are then considered, such as Nonius, Sestius and Arrius. Finally, I shall explore what the capability to make these sort of attacks at such a time tells us about Catullus. I conclude with a final appraisal of Catullus' political voice.

ATTACKING CAESAR

As the order stands, poem xxix is the first poem to attack Caesar. It is a substantial poem: in length there are only five poems that are longer in the polymetrics. It is also substantial in the weight of the men involved. It attacks Caesar through the profligacy of his chief of works, Mamurra, accusing the latter of squandering the wealth of the newly-conquered provinces of Gaul and Britain. It also attacks Caesar directly as a shameless man, a glutton and a gambler (xxix 2: *impudicus et vorax et aleo*), and implicates his son-in-law Pompey in his ruinous behaviour. Furthermore, the whole senate is implicated by Catullus' accusation that only gamblers, gluttons and shameless men would put up with such behaviour. The geographical range of the poem is also impressive; Catullus refers to

Mamurra's role in the Mithridatic war, under Pompey, and thereafter, with Caesar in Spain, Gaul and Britain. The language is direct and highly abusive: Caesar is addressed in the vocative, as *cinaede Romule* (effeminate Romulus, desiring to be anally penetrated), while Mamurra is *diffututa mentula* ('knackered penis'). Both are terms difficult to translate in English, in part due to the fact they are highly abusive Latin obscenities. Caesar is also addressed as *imperator unice* ('matchless general'), but the positive address is clearly ironic in the context of such a poem.

Caesar is again addressed directly as *unice imperator* in poem liv, linking this poem to xxix. Once more, it is Caesar's associates who provoke the attack, in this case the otherwise unknown Otho, Libo and Fuficius. The insults are personal, but unspecific; they include accusations of weak-headedness, rusticity, and lack of cleanliness. What is particularly interesting is that Catullus announces his deliberate intention to aggravate Caesar; 'again my innocuous iambics will rile you, Generalissimo.'⁴ This poem is clearly provocative and unshrinking in its attack. Whether Caesar knew who wrote poem xxix – and this is a point I address later in this chapter – the use of the same terms of address would leave him in no doubt that the same man had written both poems, and that he meant every insult. It is also made plain that Caesar's associates are named with the express purpose of annoying Caesar.

Poem lvii returns to abusing Caesar directly and this time it does so by addressing him by name, 'Caesar'. There is a clear link with poem xxix as Caesar is once again called a *cinaedus* and *pathicus*, but this time the attack is even stronger as he is branded with the same faults as Mamurra, also the butt of xxix, rather than being faulted for allowing Mamurra a free rein to indulge in such conduct. The poem expands on the theme of sexual perversion and depravity and ends with the same line: 'They are a fine match, the shameless sexual perverts.'⁵ As explained in chapter 3, taking a passive role was

unacceptable for élite Roman men, and switching between roles was seen as particularly depraved. It is worth noting, therefore, that it was simply not possible to insult Roman men more vehemently than this verbally or conceptually; Catullus was not pulling his punches.

The final poem in the series addressed to and about Caesar is a poem with a highly disrespectful tone. In poem xciii, Catullus announces to Caesar, addressed as ‘Caesar’ as in poem lvii, that he does not care about being friendly with Caesar, and is not even bothered what colour he is, black or white. Its two lines employ a highly dismissive, even arrogant tone, especially if this is Catullus’ response to overtures of friendship from Caesar either direct or through an intermediary. The reference to skin colour is difficult to explain, as Romans did not discriminate in this way. A simple solution is that Catullus is referring to honorific likenesses of Caesar that one could see in the centre of the city; the busts and statues of Caesar that must have been standing in his own residence and at various places in Rome at the time, in honour of his deeds abroad. As we know from many surviving examples, these could be soot-covered or made of dark coloured stone such as green slate.⁶

There is therefore a group of four poems attacking Caesar directly. Closely related to these is the cycle of poems attacking Mamurra alone. Two of these (xli and xliii) are indirect attacks on the ‘bankrupt of Formiae’ through his alleged girlfriend, Ameana. The mention of the town of Formiae links this bankrupt to the Mamurra of lvii. Both Mamurra and his girlfriend are addressed in highly defamatory language: Mamurra is ‘multifucking tool’ (xxix, 13 *diffututa mentula*), whereas Ameana is ‘the female fuck-up’ (xli, 1 *puella defututa*).⁷ In the last chapter, I discussed how the attack on Ameana could really be an attack on Mamurra; Catullus denigrates her looks and alleges that she is not a mistress faithful to Mamurra but a prostitute available to anyone who is willing to pay her over-

inflated price. Mentioning Mamurra's bankruptcy also implies that Mamurra is reduced to pimping for funds, and failing even at that. Skinner has argued that both Mamurra and Aemeana complement each other in their financial ineptitude; the attack on Aemeana continues the theme of financial irregularities.⁸

Catullus develops his attack on Mamurra through a highly derogatory synecdoche where the penis of Mamurra comes to stand for his whole self; Mamurra is addressed as 'Penis' (*mentula*) in the rest of the poems in this cycle. In poem xciv, a two-line epigram matching the previous one abusing Caesar, '*Mentula*' is accused of adultery, and this is presented as the obvious and understandable behaviour for a *mentula*. This is of course highly reductive of Mamurra's real character, rank and status. Another two-line epigram, poem cv, deals with '*Mentula*' being thrown off Mount Pipla by the Muses, presumably referring to some failed (or so Catullus infers) literary undertaking. This literary theme may provide a link with poem lvii, where Caesar and Mamurra are described as *erudituli*. Poem cxiv, and Poem cxv, the penultimate poem in the collection, return to the subject of '*Mentula*'s' profligate behaviour, squandering an estate to rival that of Croesus.

Caesar and Mamurra collectively count for ten poems out of a collection of 116; nearly ten per cent. This is more than the poems to Juventius; as a cycle of poems, they are second in number only to that about Lesbia. These poems are without doubt a significant section of the collection, and were very important to Catullus as a poet.

The political effect of the poems was remarkable: external evidence, albeit from the early second century AD, is provided by Suetonius. He commented that the poems about Mamurra damaged Caesar's reputation, and did so permanently. This was the man who would become head of state during Catullus' lifetime, and while Catullus may have been unaware of quite how powerful Caesar would become, he was already a proconsul on an extraordinary command, and in open alliance with Crassus, one of the richest men in

Rome, and Pompey, the most prestigious man alive. Catullus' attacks were also often linked with those of his friend, Calvus. One of Calvus' attacks was that Caesar as a grown man had a sexual relationship with Nicomedes, in which he took the passive role, suitable only for boys and slaves, and for which the derogatory term *cinaedus* was appropriate.⁹ These poems similarly inflicted a lasting stain on Caesar's reputation, and in their subject matter complement and support Catullus' accusations. Both poets' power to inflict damage also suggests one reason why Caesar was very ready to reconcile himself with them and other poets writing such poems. The political impact of the poems cannot therefore be denied. I turn now to exploring how the poems achieved their political impact.

While the courts and assemblies were obvious venues for politically motivated attacks, by Catullus' era there were others more suited to Catullus. Smith, in discussing libel in the first century BC comments: 'But with the growth of individualism in politics and the emergence of the *Populares*, to whom the traditions of the past meant little, no means of discrediting an opponent were left untried; and among these means were pamphlets, lampoons, epigrams and the like.'¹⁰ As I have argued, attacking reputation was a fundamental political weapon, and exposing sexual deviancy and lack of self-control are key aspects of such an assault.¹¹ Through his poems, Catullus was able to attack the reputation and masculinity of his victims and so strike at the heart of their political credibility. Accordingly, Caesar is insulted as a *cinaedus* (xxix, 5), the highly abusive word for a passive sexual partner and an insult that puts him in company with such as the bankrupt Furius (xvi), the ultra-soft Thallus (xxv), and the bath thief Vibennius junior (xxxiii). Caesar's partner, Mamurra is mocked as *superbus* and *superfluens*, (xxix, 6), the abuse heightened by the alliterative hiss of the repeated 's'. Mamurra's lack of mental control is emphasised by his being likened to a bird known for its amorous nature (*albulus*

columbus ‘a little white dove’), the insult made clear by the diminutive, and to the Greek Adoneus, a highly unsuitable role model for a Roman military man.

The sexual perversions portrayed in the poems against Caesar and Mamurra have not always been appreciated in political terms. Vinson has argued that ‘Catullus takes the traditional element of sexual abuse and imparts to it a significance which extends beyond the literal to include the metaphorical.... Catullus transforms this venerable practice by adding a symbolic dimension in which unacceptable sexual conduct becomes an image for equally unacceptable political conduct.’¹² While Vinson is surely correct to emphasise the political nature of such abuse, I am not quite sure how she means that Catullus’ use differs from earlier usage; the accusation of effeminacy was a common one in politics, and frequently used against Caesar. For example, Cicero announced Caesar’s impotence as a political mover when he asserted his manly impotence by pointing out that he scratched his head with a single finger.¹³ Wray has pointed out that Calvus attacked Pompey in a similar way for his head scratching.¹⁴ Calvus was not the only one to accuse Caesar of being seduced by King Nicomedes of Bithynia; Suetonius also mentioned *orationes* by Curio which attacked him for sexual debauchery.¹⁵

Catullus does not restrict his attack to sexual deviancy. There are also subtle attacks on Caesar’s dictatorial nature; he is addressed as *Romule*, a king, with Mamurra called *superbus* in the next line, words too emotionally branded to be lightly used by Catullus. He also attacks Caesar as a glutton and gambler. What Vinson may be hinting at when she speaks of a metaphorical dimension to Catullus’ abuse is the fact that the actual vices need not in themselves be accurate reflections of the man abused; Caesar was not a gluttonous man, but this vice is to be interpreted as a signal of a lack of moral integrity rather than to be taken literally.¹⁶ Likewise, the political intent is not diminished by the gross exaggeration of Catullus’ abuse, for example, addressing Mamurra as *mentula* and

Caesar as *cinaedus*, or its humour, for example, speaking of Mamurra bundled down a mountainside by Graces clutching pitchforks. The aims of invective included the entertainment of the audience, whether in the forum or at an intimate dinner party. Just as the use of entertaining and highly abusive but inaccurate invective did not undermine the serious intent of orators, so we should not consider Catullus' political message any less serious because of its exaggeration and humour. As Edwards argued: 'Insults exchanged in the courtroom or on the *rostra* are profoundly unreliable as guides to the actual behaviour of their victims. But to claim that they were not taken literally is not to say that they were empty or meaningless.'¹⁷

In a society where a lack of moral rectitude was a standard explanation for wayward political behaviour, it is hardly surprising, therefore, that there is a strong verbal similarity between the descriptions of those who fail to restrain Caesar and Mamurra in Catullus' poem xxix and Sallust's description of Catiline's supporters. Catullus' poem starts with the lines: 'Who can watch this...unless he's shameless (*impudicus*) and a glutton (*vorax*) and a gambler (*aleo*)? Sallust says that Catiline supporters are such men as 'quicumque *impudicus*, ganeo [profligacy connected with eating=*vorax*], *aleator*, manu, ventre, pene bona patria laceraverat' (whatever wanton, glutton, or gambler had, by means of his hand, belly or penis, ravaged his ancestral fortune).¹⁸ Furthermore, Catullus' invective against Mamurra is notable for its dependence on the theme of extravagant expenditure, similar to that used of Catiline's supporters. Mamurra is accused of using up all the income from Gaul and Britain (xxix, 3-4) in terms of squander and gluttony (xxix, 16: *expatrat*; *helluatus*), and of squandering the income from an excellent estate (cxiv). His sexual perversions are summed up by Catullus' use of the priapic noun *mentula* to address him rather than his name; he fits the description of the type of desperate, debased profligate who supported politicians like Catiline very well. There is an additional element

to this portrayal of Mamurra: as he suits the picture of the supporters of Catiline, it suggests that the man he supports, Caesar, may have the attributes of a Catiline. I am not suggesting that Catullus is using Sallust's description, or vice versa, but that they are parallel uses of a standard tradition, whereby moral failings signified lack of rectitude in political matters as well.¹⁹

Another aspect of Roman psyche relevant to Catullus' method of attack is the Roman attitude to conquered people. As Edwards comments: 'Many Roman authors represented Roman national identity in terms of the moral superiority of Romans in comparison with other peoples.'²⁰ If Caesar does not live up to this expectation of strong morality, it undermines his authority as a commander and the validity of his conquests, especially against brave and moral foes. It is in this context, that we should put Cato's call that Caesar to be handed over to the Gallic enemy he was fighting for the crime of violating a truce that had been made with them.²¹ This seemingly bizarre demand of Cato's can be understood as an attack aiming to tarnish Caesar's reputation rather than having any real hope of success. In this aim, it was far from futile. Catullus similarly is undermining Caesar's reputation as a commander who acts appropriately and deserves *auctoritas* for his achievements. Catullus' poems made their mark too; he was hitting Caesar where he was vulnerable; as Gruen said: 'Caesar's *dignitas* was an obsession.'²² Catullus' attack is two-pronged; as well as attacking Caesar directly through such abusive terminology as 'cinaede Romule', he also makes it explicit that Caesar is responsible for Mamurra's actions. Catullus intends to diminish and sour the huge glory that Caesar undoubtedly attained by his conquests by the suggestion that all the profits are being siphoned off by an individual. With Caesar's command increasingly under threat as the decade of the fifties went on, such attacks on his achievements even in this earlier period should be viewed as having political significance.

Catullus' wider audience in Rome would also be concerned by any suggestion that an individual was having all the profits of conquest. Caesar's power, like any Roman politician, rested in part on his ability to control the votes of the Roman people. A poem accusing Caesar of letting Mamurra eat up all the profits of empire would appeal to the greed of the city audience, Caesar's *clientes*, as it were. As Earl commented: 'So long as the individual noble protected his client, so long as the government assured stability for the citizens, the governed and the clients were content to leave politics to the politicians.'²³ Catullus is deliberately undermining that security.

It is possible that Catullus' mention of 'pretentious litterateurs' (lvii 8: *erudituli*) is an allusion to both Caesar's and Mamurra's literary works. We know that Catullus thought little of Mamurra's works as he describes him as repulsed by the Muses in poem cv. Caesar was writing his war commentaries at the time. These commentaries were his campaign history, written annually and with consummate political skill; they were a very important part of Caesar's strategy for maintaining and building his *auctoritas*. Through them, Caesar found an innovative way by which to keep his name directly before the people even while absent from Rome. As Welch points out, Caesar's own writings reveal, 'A Caesar supremely conscious of Roman politics and of his need to be central to Roman thinking even when he was in faraway Gaul or barbarous Britain.'²⁴ This allusion could therefore be an attack on Caesar by devaluing his commentaries on the Gallic war in a poem ostensibly just attacking his sexual perversions.

We do not know how Catullus' poems were circulated, but it is likely that the invectives were recited at dinner parties and bandied about in the forum. The fact that damage was done to Caesar's reputation suggests strongly that his poems were circulated much more widely than within Catullus' immediate circle. Two-liners such as poem xciii (*nil nimium studeo, Caesar...*) would be useful for claquers to recite in the forum and

theatre. Taylor suggests of Catullus and Calvus that: 'Their biting iambs provided the opposition with priceless slogans.'²⁵ This is not just supposition; Suetonius says that Calvus' poems were 'frequently quoted by his enemies.'²⁶ We also know that Caesar's consular enemy Bibulus published his edicts in 59 by publicly displaying them. They concentrated on similar subjects to those treated by Catullus and Calvus, such as Caesar's inappropriate behaviour with Nicomedes, and they were very popular reading: Cicero gives testimony to their popular appeal, saying that crowds gathered and blocked the way where they were put up.²⁷ Catullus himself speaks of his invectives being spoken by the crowd (poem xl 5: *in ora vulgi*) and making their subject 'notorious' (xl 6: *notus*). How Catullus' poems may have been used can be illustrated by the example of Milo's trial in February 56, as described by Cicero: Clodius as aedile was prosecuting Milo at a *iudicium populi*, and when his *operae* tried to intimidate Pompey by shouting and being abusive, Clodius was in turn verbally intimidated by the defence's supporters, who used his relationship with his sister Clodia as the subject of obscene verses.²⁸

It must also be remembered that some of Catullus' poems made truly excellent invective; Dixon does not exaggerate when she says: 'He was a master of invective, turning out political and personal lampoons of magnificent vulgarity and hyperbole.'²⁹ Catullus' Callimachean ideals of learning and polish did not in any way diminish the popular appeal of these verses; in his invectives, he adds Archilochean gusto and aggression in his subject matter and approach. He was clearly aware of his two approaches, as he reflects on the different types of verse he sends to Gellius in poem cxvi.³⁰ Catullus was also actively aware of the power of his invective to stain and denigrate character, possibly permanently; Archilochus was said to have provoked the suicide of his victim, Lycambes, and Catullus often talks of the power of verse to immortalise or punish.³¹

As mentioned above, Catullus' invective ranges more widely including the entire senate, as senators were responsible for restraining such profligate behaviour, especially in relation to imperial revenues. With the significant drains on the public purse caused by the grain distributions, extended by Cato in 62 and made free by Clodius in 58, the revenues from newly-conquered territories were particularly important. Suggesting that Mamurra was being allowed to squander large amounts of money was a goad to action to the groups opposing Caesar. The Roman state even had a role in restraining personal profligacy, at least in theory. As Edwards points out, the state through legislation dating back to the Twelve Tables, could involve itself in preventing a young man squandering all his wealth by imposing a curator: 'one of the most curious features of Roman attitudes to extravagance...is the treatment of the prodigal under the law.'³² The squandering of personal wealth by Mamurra is therefore part and parcel of the political invective along with his abuse of state revenues.

Vinson has argued that Catullus uses his political invective to attack the political status quo; 'these sexual metaphors... serve as the vehicle by which Catullus expresses his disenchantment with the status quo and affirms his belief in traditional Roman values.'³³ I agree that there is certainly a broad-sweeping attack against those who conduct affairs in such a way, and those who allow it. I am not so sure, however, that Catullus can be seen as affirming a belief in traditional Roman values in his poems. Such values do not fit well either with the provocatively effeminate, Hellenistic pose that he adopts in many poems, such as v and vii, nor with his complaints that he is not allowed a fair share of provincial exploitation, for example, in poem xxvii. Wray has pointed out the ambivalence of Catullus' position as an attacker of other men's morals: 'The speaker of Poems 5 and 7, by his abject dependence on the beloved, by his turn away from phallic pleasure to oral, and perhaps most of all by the uncontrolled unrestraint (*impotentia*) of his gluttony for kisses,

impersonates and performs a provocative effeminacy that has been effectively invisible to much of Catullus' modern reception.'³⁴

It should perhaps be considered, however, that Catullus' audience probably did not care what Catullus' own personal morals were, so long as they had a poem deflating Caesar, just as today, journalists can attack figures in the media for all sorts of reasons without anyone questioning whether there is any hypocrisy involved. Competing with his peers for public attention, Catullus would have had a harder time justifying his attacks and dealing with retaliation. This is evident in the give and take described in the poems about such men; for example, in poem xvi, Catullus evens the score against Aurelius and Furius, in poem xxxvii he attacks Egnatius among others as wronging him and poem xl, mentioned above, abuses Ravidus for the same reason. Against this background of petty squabbles and jockeying for position, the aloof, traditionalist Catullus of Vinson does not strike true. The direct aggression of the attacks, with the flagrant defamation of character, hardly befits her traditionalist Catullus working through a persona.³⁵ Jealousy as a motive triggering Catullus' attacks against such as Caesar is far more likely than such detachment of viewpoint. Jealousy of another's pre-eminence was a common emotion in a society where the élite, and in particular the *nobiles*, were fighting for possession of just two top magistracies a year. Catullus' fixation on Clodia suggests a jealous disposition; in poems viii and xi, he tortures himself with images of her with other men, and he shows a complete inability to move on from the failed relationship. In his relationship with Juventius he tries to pre-empt the attentions of other men and persuade Juventius into a faithful relationship with him alone.

It is also easy to speak of a golden age of traditional Roman values, but in reality, what exactly does this mean? In what way was the status quo of the fifties any different to what had always been? The case of Gn Plancius, prosecuted in 54 by M Iuventus

Laterensis is instructive. Juventius argued that the election of Plancius must have been due to improper means simply because he himself, descendant of consuls on both sides of his family, had been defeated. This assumption of a noble's right to office can be seen as part of traditional Roman politics rather than anything new in the fifties BC simply by the restricted number of *novi homines* gaining access to the Senate, and the even smaller number attaining the consulship in the previous century. The élite of Rome continued to retain its stranglehold over the various assemblies either through weighted voting in the *comitia centuriata* or their control over clients in the *comitia tributa/plebis*. Within the élite, the dissensions remained the traditional ones, typically over election to office and controlling access to power, and revealed themselves through disputes over such bills as those which created grateful clients or gave grants of extraordinary *imperium*. Any notion of a higher moral standpoint triggering Catullus' condemnation of Caesar also needs to be seen in the context of his connection with the Clodian *gens*; this was not a family known for its high moral stance.

A better way to explain Catullus' political stance is that Catullus does not portray any consistent political attitude, but rather reacts in a personal way to individual circumstances and to individual politicians. This, as I have argued in the introduction, is far more what we would expect of a Roman élite man rather than any formulated political policy. Such a personal reaction in no way undermines its political qualities. Catullus can therefore be *vesanus* in love, but still attack Mamurra and Caesar for their sexual relationship. He can wish to exploit provinces himself, but not want to see this happen by another Roman.

What appears inconsistent to us is typical of Roman politics and it is useful to observe how it was not important in Roman politics to present consistent political policies; men of completely different political ideologies could put forward similar programmes to

Rome's legislative bodies. So for example, as mentioned above, M Porcius Cato, a staunch traditionalist sponsored a grain bill in 62, increasing the numbers receiving subsidised grain substantially. This was followed by a *lex frumentaria* in 58, sponsored by the highly untraditional P Clodius. 'Obviously, the advocacy of corn distribution knew no party,' as Gruen commented. He further comments on the legal history of the grain distribution: 'That issue engaged the activities of men as different as Cicero, Crassus, Hortensius, Cato, and Clodius: popular demagogues, enterprising politicians, and conservatives alike.'³⁶ Gruen also points out that it was not just in vote-catching moves that this occurred: both Clodius and Cato carried measures to restrict and regulate activities of public employees, hardly headline-grabbing legislation.³⁷ Consistency of policy was not something that Roman politicians worried about.

Competition between Roman politicians was a very different matter and Catullus' role in the competition between Caesar and Pompey may also be an aspect of poem xxix that is easily missed; it is notable that one person who does not come out of this poem with any glory, and who might feel very aggrieved by his portrayal, is Pompey. Pompey is associated with the damage done by Caesar as he is accused of ruining everything along with Caesar (xxix 24 *perdidistis omnia*), but by way of recompense very little is said of his achievements. On the contrary, he is 'trumped' by Caesar throughout the poem. Caesar is the general without equal (*imperator unice*), despite only having been a commander since 61 while Pompey had spent two decades in this position. Pompey's campaigns in Pontus are referred to, but only first in a list of four countries, the other three seeing defeat at the hands of Caesar.³⁸ Finally, Pompey is referred to not by name but by his relationship with Caesar, as son-in-law through marriage, giving Caesar the more authoritative position as the father-in-law.

The relationship between Pompey and Caesar had travelled a long way since Caesar was very much the junior partner in 59 BC. By 56, he had achieved serious military successes to rival those of Pompey, and had gained much authority and status as an eminent pro-consul. The intransigence of the traditionalist group headed by Cato kept driving Pompey into renewing his alliance with Caesar, and the conference at Luca bridged any gap that had formed between the two men. The third man, Crassus, helped maintain the balance of power between the three triumvirs, while Julia, in love with Pompey, was no doubt a very vital communication channel between father and son-in-law. Dissension between them was not likely to be in her interest. This is not to say, however, that dissension was something their enemies among the élite did not try to stir up, especially by arousing Pompey's jealousy against the man who was growing in power while Pompey's *auctoritas* was diminished on a regular basis by the actions of his rivals in the Senate.

In considering the effects of Catullus' poems, one of the striking aspects of poem xxix as opposed to other poems such as lvii is the ambivalence Catullus shows in his attitude to Caesar. This arguably undercuts the negativity and even the impact of his message. It appears, therefore, that while Caesar's ill-advised friendship and forbearance with such a man as Mamurra is a key trigger for Catullus' abuse, there is something else going on in this poem. Remove Mamurra – and Caesar's faults connected to him – and much of the sting has gone; we are left with Caesar being described as a general without parallel (*imperator unice*), who had travelled to the farthest island of the West (*in ultima occidentis insula*), with conquests in Spain (modern Portugal), Gaul and Britain which were bringing significant revenues to Rome. These are the very qualities and achievements that Caesar would have wished to have broadcast at Rome; Horace said that Augustus would be deemed a god on earth when he had subdued the Britons (and Parthians).³⁹ While these aspects are mentioned only to be undercut by their

misappropriation or abuse, some vestige of Caesar's tattered glory remains despite these insults.

In comparison, poem lvii deals precisely with faults of sexual perversion and profligacy in which Caesar is equally censured, and the emphasis is on this joint depravity (*morbosi pariter*); there is no ambivalence in this poem's intent to harm Caesar. It is also significant to readers of Catullus's other poems that there is a strong verbal link between lvii, about *improbis cinaedis, Mamurrae pathicoque Caesarique* and poem xvi, addressed to *Aureli pathice et cinaede Furi*. Also linking the poems is the structural similarity; the first line is repeated to form the last line, word for word, a pattern only repeated in two other poems by Catullus, one of which is an attack on at least one supporter of Caesar.⁴⁰ Mamurra and Furius are also linked by the theme of insolvency in poems ostensibly about a love interest common with Catullus. As Wray comments: 'Both pairs [23&24; 41&43] have their members linked by a scorchingly scornful, memorably snappy invective formula.... In both instances, the brunt of the scorn is financial. Both pairs feature a 'love' object, whether woman or boy, whose function in the text is primarily as a contested property and a coin of invective exchange.'⁴¹ These verbal, structural and contextual links stress the unworthy nature of Caesar's henchmen, in particular Mamurra, and his inappropriate sexual and moral behaviour, more suited to uncultured nobodies such as Furius and Aurelius, not to a key player in Roman politics. Furthermore, the virility of Catullus' poems is emphasised by the verbal link; as he threatened to orally rape Furius and Aurelius, so his poems are brandished at a Caesar weakened by his depravity.⁴²

Poem liv also attacks unworthy beneficiaries of Caesar's grace, this time unknowns such as Otho, Libo, and Fuficius. Interestingly, Catullus speaks of his iambi as being in themselves *immanent* while having the explicit intention of annoying (*irascere*) Caesar. Lee translates the Latin word as 'innocuous, Whigham as 'naïve'; in general we may

understand the Latin to mean ‘innocent, not deserving punishment’. Retaliation is exactly what a Roman man would expect from such verses, so the word Catullus uses is interesting. It is as if he is pointing out to Caesar the innocence of the attack; the guilt lies with the one perpetrating the wrongdoing, not with the poet for bringing it to his attention. This approach makes the attack appear less personal, stemming more from a sense of duty than desire to hurt. It is useful to compare it to the role of the fool or court jester whose job it was to tell the truth, however, unpalatable to his royal master. This action was obviously often risky if not done with sufficient wit; when the fool comments on Lear’s rash behaviour towards his daughters, he is threatened by Lear: ‘Take heed, sirrah: the whip.’⁴³ Catullus clearly had no fear of such retaliation, however, and this is a point I shall elaborate further below.

While I have argued that there is some ambivalence in poem xxix, when combined with poems like lvii, the impact on Caesar was overwhelmingly negative; Suetonius made that clear. It does, however, make the reconciliation between Catullus and Caesar a little more understandable; it suggests that there was much that Catullus admired about Caesar even at the time that he was attacking him with such violent obscenities. There are two further points to make about this apparent ambivalence in Catullus’ attitude. Firstly, that it does not appear that genuine personal enmity was behind the attacks on Caesar, although this may be the case with those against Mamurra. Catullus could feel real anger against the unworthy beneficiaries of Caesar’s favours, but not against the great man himself. Secondly, in a strange way, such attacks, despite what Suetonius says, could have positive results. If we remember that Caesar’s own soldiers sang songs about his passivity with Nicomedes at his triumph, we may realise the complexity of abusive attacks at this time.⁴⁴ While these upset Caesar, his soldiers were clearly not trying to damage him, so why did they sing of such things? It may be that they were showing just how far Caesar was above

the rules and how he was sufficiently robust enough in temperament and reputation to tolerate such abuse of his character especially in a humorous setting; Caesar, it is clear, could not be judged in the same way as other Romans.

In Catullus' case, consciously or otherwise, he may have been emphasising Caesar's high degree of power by his attacks on his morality. As Edwards pointed out: 'Leading men of the Republic were among those most often characterised as outstanding for their 'immorality'. The attempt to control such individuals by castigating their vices at the same time created an association between immorality and power.'⁴⁵ This is not to say that Catullus' overall intention was positive; other key moralising voices, such as Cicero and Cato, cannot have had any intention of increasing the prestige of those they attacked for moral reasons. Nevertheless, his attacks did have some positive outcomes, as already noted in relation to his rivalry with Pompey.

There are also some aspects of the poems about Mamurra that are, on further investigation, rather ambivalent. Neither the tone of the poems about Aemeana nor the extent of Mamurra's estate and his profligacy are as straightforward as they first appear. In an earlier chapter, I discussed Aemeana, the girlfriend of Mamurra, and commented that the insults of poem xli relating to Aemeana's sense and beauty are probably not intended literally as Catullus admits openly in poem xliii that others find her attractive. It is possible that there might be an element of humour here, and that while Aemeana's availability was certainly a taunt against Mamurra, her attractiveness, or lack of, is less convincing as an attack. Why Catullus undermines his position here is unclear.

The second area of ambivalence concerns the estate he is said to waste. In poem cxiv, Catullus accuses Mamurra (*Mentula*) of outspending his income, despite this income coming from a good estate, near Firmum in Picenum. In poem cxv, the riches of the estate are said to rival those of Croesus who was proverbially rich. At face value, the attack of

the poems is that Mamurra is able to overspend despite having an excellent estate. This would connect with the accusation of dissipating his patrimony in poem xxix. Catullus, however, gives the extent of the estate in some detail; thirty *iugera* of pasture, forty of arable land, and the rest is sea. He also mentions woodland and marsh that would provide a certain amount of game, although the Romans did not indulge in recreational hunting. There is no mention of vines, olives, or other more lucrative crops. Furthermore, seventy *iugera* of workable farmland is far from what we might term an 'estate'. Allotments under Tiberius' land reforms were typically thirty *iugera*, signifying a small-holding sustaining a small family, while Gaius Gracchus' land bill allowed those occupying public land to retain up to 500 *iugera* per family.⁴⁶

Catullus' agreement that Mamurra is rich is therefore apparently ironic, as is his comment that the goods produced by Mamurra's estate could rival the riches of Croesus. It is possible that Catullus is responding to Mamurra's boasts of owning an extensive estate in Picenum; Catullus emphasises the meagreness of the profitable land – simply seventy *iugera*, and points out that much of the land that what Mamurra claims to own is in fact sea. Mamurra may have an abundance of cheap commodities such as wild birds and fish, but lacks all valuable items. Seen in this light, Catullus is showing up Mamurra's financial pretensions, as he showed up his literary pretensions in poem cv.

It is also possible that Catullus is not being ironic, and that the logic of his argument works in a different way to how a modern reader takes it. Bearing in mind what was said above about associating accusations of immorality with power, it is possible that Catullus was being very careful not to say anything that could be construed as a compliment; he therefore makes it clear in his accusation that Mamurra is a nonentity and does this by emphasising his lack of assets. While this appears to be in contradiction to his portrayal of Mamurra as a wastrel, this would not then be Catullus' intention. Rather we

should think of it as a sort of metaphorical double negative; our modern logic, like the English language where two negatives make a positive, sees a contradiction where two insults cancel each other out leaving a rather weak result. Catullus' logic, however, like languages such as Latin where two negatives increase and add force to each other, sees two insults which add weight to each other and are not to be understood in relation to each other; Mamurra wastes vast sums of money and assets and, independent of this, Mamurra had a worthless estate, consisting of the lowest forms of farmland which he makes out is far better than it is.

Furthermore, there is a political aspect to Catullus' attacks on Mamurra's wealth as entry to the Equestrian order and the Senate depended on a financial qualification of ownership of land worth 400 000 sesterces. Catullus may be challenging Mamurra's right to equestrian status symbols, such as the use of restricted seating in the theatre and wearing the gold ring, both of which he may have been awarded by Caesar as an *imperator*.⁴⁷ This is not to say that Catullus was seriously disputing Mamurra's right to his political status, but that such poems as these would prove an irritant by discrediting him and attacking his dignity. While it is likely that Mamurra's senatorial career dated after Caesar's return to Rome, and therefore after the reconciliation between Catullus and Caesar, it is also possible that Catullus is attacking Mamurra's senatorial credentials; Mamurra probably owed his seat in the Senate to Caesar rather than the usual process of election.⁴⁸ How sensitive he was on this matter we do not know nor how sensitive Caesar was to having his officers attacked in this way. It is also not necessary to assume any reconciliation between Catullus and Mamurra in addition to that with Caesar; no change of tone is traceable. Poem cxv, the penultimate poem in the collection although not necessarily the last written, ends with a phrase vibrant in its alliteration, assonance and insult; *mentula magna minax*, 'a great threatening Priapus!'

In comparison, the reconciliation between Catullus and Caesar does appear to have had an impact on Catullus' poetry, and a change of tone can be traced in the poems. It is also highly relevant to the issue of Caesar's relationship with Pompey that I have already touched upon. The reconciliation appears to have happened by the time Catullus wrote poem xi, and this poem, like poem xxix, mentions Caesar's great achievements; Catullus refers to the memorials of great Caesar across the Alps, the Gallic Rhine and the terrifying woad-painted Britons at the world's end which justify Catullus' use of the appellation, *Magnus*.⁴⁹ There is no suggestion of any negativity – at least in respect of Caesar – and it appears that Catullus is speaking genuinely of the magnitude of Caesar's achievements.⁵⁰

We must not underestimate the political loading of these words; Catullus is saying explicitly that Caesar has achieved tremendous and previously unimaginable victories. When Catullus mentions the *ambulatio* of Pompey in lv, there is no such elaboration and it appears that the reference is merely geographical rather than laudatory. Furthermore, the adjective Catullus uses for Caesar is striking; in the context of great military achievement, *Magnus*, once Alexander's epithet, now meant Pompey; Catullus himself speaks of 'Magnus' Walk' when he refers to Pompey's *ambulatio*.⁵¹ Catullus is therefore suggesting that Caesar no less than Pompey has earned the cognomen *Magnus*. As Welch has pointed out, Caesar was 'striving about all else to outdo his most significant rival, Pompey the Great.'⁵² In poem xi, therefore, Catullus appears to be supporting Caesar, and joining with Caesar's other 'friends' in keeping his exploits before the public eye and his prestige as equal, if not superior, to Pompey. This would be a natural progression from his ambivalent approach to Caesar's achievements discussed in xxix.

In chapter 2, I discussed when poem xi and xxix might have been written, and concluded that poem xi was written any time after August 55, while 55 to 52 was the possible timeframe for xxix. When we consider the historical context of those years, the

successes and setbacks of Caesar's campaigns in Gaul make it more likely that both poems date to the autumn of 55 rather than 54 or later. In 55 BC, Caesar campaigned across the Rhine for eighteen days; an act that he hoped would discourage the Gauls from any hope of alliance with German tribes. Crossing the Rhine was great propaganda material, but Caesar went one step further still, and crossed the ocean to the world's end, attacking Britain; both Rhine and Britain are mentioned in poem xi. The Senate decreed an unprecedented twenty-days' thanksgiving in mid November. This was the same award as for his defeat of Vercingetorix in 52, showing the value given by his contemporaries to his successes in 55; Caesar's tide was running very high at the end of this year and his achievements must have seemed *magni* indeed.

The following winter was a very different situation. In discussing Caesar's composition of the Gallic War, Wiseman has argued compellingly that Caesar wrote an annual report at the end of each year of campaigning in which he let the people know his successes.⁵³ This allowed him to make the maximum political advantage out of his campaigns, keeping his name and achievements very much in the public eye so that he remained at the forefront of popular opinion at Rome. His choice of medium was perceptive; '[i]n late-republican Rome historical narrative was popular entertainment.'⁵⁴ The situation at the end of 54 was so bad that his system broke down: 'Instead of a glorious narrative of victory, what came to Rome was news of the deaths of two legates and about seven thousand officers and men. One of the winter camps had been overrun, and Caesar had to fight very hard to prevent the same thing happening to the others.'⁵⁵ The campaign to Britain had been cut short, and the situation remained so bad in Gaul that Caesar ended up remaining all winter in Gaul rather than returning to Cisalpine Gaul as usual to carry out the assizes and other winter duties. The attack on Britain did not bring the rewards Caesar and other Romans may have hoped from it. Cicero, early in 54, was writing of

disappointing returns from the new province: 'I hear that there is in Britain neither gold nor silver.' Later that year, he commented: 'As to the situation in Britain, I understand from your letters that there is no cause for alarm, nor for rejoicing either.'⁵⁶

Such an unwelcome situation would have been ideal for Catullus to exploit in his abusive verses against Caesar; his silence makes it more likely, therefore, that poem xxix was written the previous year, or early in 54, when hopes of a good return from the invasion of Britain were still entertained. As for poem xi, if we can trust the detail in Suetonius, he says that Caesar invited Catullus to dinner the same afternoon that Catullus apologised. This clearly did not happen in Rome as Caesar was away from Rome from 58 until 49BC. While this might seem to put undue reliance on evidence written long after the event, it is likely that Suetonius was accurate in this instance as he gives three different accounts of how Caesar went about showing his forgiveness to the three men mentioned by Suetonius; Memmius is helped towards the consulship, a development which fits well with a new *amicitia* and exemplified the sort of support Caesar could offer through his intermediaries at Rome. Calvus received a letter, which reflects Caesar's absence from Rome, whereas Catullus alone meets with Caesar; this could have easily taken place during the winter, in Catullus' homeland, Cisalpine Gaul. Indeed the mention of continued friendship between Caesar and Catullus' father reinforces the Cisalpine connection. An invitation to dinner is also appropriate to signal privately and publicly an ending of political *inimicitia*; Epstein in his general discussion of political reconciliations comments: 'Because reconciliations were accorded the sanctity of a treaty they were often accompanied by more than mere professions of good faith.... Banquets provided the most common reinforcement.'⁵⁷ It is possible, therefore that this event occurred in Cisalpine Gaul, where Caesar generally spent the winters, but not, as mentioned above, the winter of 54/3. The reconciliation either occurred shortly after Catullus wrote his attack on Mamurra

or much later, during the winter of 53/2 or after Caesar's victory against Vercingetorix in 52BC.

Caesar's prestige and influence in Rome, his *auctoritas*, makes it easy to forget that he was away from the city of Rome for ten years. Pompey was in Rome during this time, and was particularly in the public eye during his consulship of 55 BC alongside Crassus. Even after the consuls had been allotted their proconsular commands – Spain for Pompey and the East for Crassus – Pompey remained near Rome during the summer campaigning seasons, by virtue of his *imperium* in North Italy, using legates to run his campaigns. Pompey's proximity to Rome meant he was better situated than Caesar for maintaining a high profile for himself, for making the most political capital out of any successes he achieved, and for keeping a watchful eye on his political allies (*amici*) at Rome who should be maintaining his commanding authority (*auctoritas*). His presence near Rome, for example, prompted his appointment as sole consul in 52, when electoral chaos threatened Rome.⁵⁸ Caesar's absence on the other hand may help explain his willingness to forgive useful political figures, possibly with links to all-important voting clients, such as Memmius, Calvus and Catullus, as mentioned by Suetonius. In these cases, Memmius would be useful in maintaining Caesar's good links with Bithynia, especially if he did restrain extortion during his governorship. Calvus was a key orator who could use this legal platform for or against Caesar, as well as being a potential tribune.⁵⁹ Catullus stood to inherit a serious influence with Gallic votes, and this may explain why Caesar maintained his relationship with his father.

Pompey as Caesar's son-in-law and fellow member of the triumvirate was of course one of those on whom Caesar should have been able to rely to maintain his standing at Rome. In one sense Pompey did help; in 52, during the disturbances following Clodius' murder, Caesar was able to return to Gaul where Vercingetorix was stirring up trouble due

to Pompey taking command of the situation at Rome.⁶⁰ The two men were not natural allies, and with hindsight, the clash between them seems inevitable, especially when key links between them were broken with Julia's death in 54 and that of Crassus, the third triumvir, the following year. Gruen has pointed out, however, that there was no clear dissension between the triumvirs through the fifties, and Julia's death was not such a defining moment in the relationship between the two triumvirs; Pompey remained Caesar's heir until the outbreak of civil war.⁶¹ Gruen also argues that Pompey's actions in 52 were in no way against Caesar; he arranged for Caesar, and Caesar alone, to stand *in absentia* for the consulship. While Pompey restored control of provincial commands to the senate, arguably an action against Caesar, Gruen points out that he also restored the tribunician veto of senatorial allotments; by the simple use of a friendly tribune's veto, Caesar could respond to any moves against him in the senate.⁶²

Even so, a divide and rule approach must have had its attractions to those in the Roman senate who wished to reduce triumviral power. It would be equally attractive to the group of individuals, such as Clodius, who remained at Rome and wished to exploit any power base they could for their own ends. It appears that in two very different poems (xi and xxix) Catullus was intending to inflame disharmony between the two great men of Rome by his use of positive images in relation to Caesar, even amidst foul abuse, and that he was trying to provoke jealousy in Pompey by his unequal portrayal of the two men. This is Catullus at the forefront of politics, antagonising the key players of his day.

We cannot, therefore, deny that Catullus' political poems touched on the two great men of his day and it is possible that he announced his intention to attack them in poem xxvii, a poem calling for bitterer cups of wine (*calices amariores*), possibly a metaphor for invective.⁶³ If so, this would link his attacks on Caesar and Mamurra in poem xxix with his attack in the intervening poem (xxviii) on Memmius and Caesar's father-in-law, Piso.

Poem xxvii would then introduce two poems in the Archilochean mode. Poem xxix I have discussed above. I now turn to poem xxviii and to the attacks on other politicians at the top of their game or up and coming, but not quite in Caesar and Pompey's league.

Memmius and Piso, in the context of their governorships in 57/6 BC, were on opposing sides; Memmius was an anti-Caesarian, while Piso, if we accept the identification with L Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus the governor of Macedonia, had become Caesar's father-in-law in 59 BC. Memmius was of moderate political standing as an ex-praetor, while Piso had recently been consul. Piso was accompanied by Catullus' good friends, Fabullus and Veranius, while the future tribune Cinna and Catullus himself ventured abroad to Bithynia with Memmius. As I argued in chapter 2, this was a move made by young men expecting to follow careers in politics: 'Few of the Roman poets undertook a military or political career: Calvus, Catullus (who went to Bithynia with Memmius) and Tibullus (who campaigned briefly with Messalla) are exceptions.'⁶⁴

None of the four men apparently achieved their aspirations, especially financially, and this disappointment is the trigger for Catullus' attacks on both governors in poems x, xxviii, and xlvii. In poem x, the attack is apparently incidental to the main theme of the poem, Varus' new girlfriend. Memmius is called an 'irrumator' (oral rapist), and is accused of making what was a poor financial situation worse for his staff. In poem xxviii, Piso is *vappa*, ('flat, gone off wine') and *verpa* ('circumcised'). Along with Memmius, he is accused of irrumating his *cohors*, an act this time described in some detail symbolising the abuse of their positions of power and responsibility. The friends bear all hardships and humiliations, but receive nothing in return.

Catullus' attack then turns to address more directly the breakdown in the patron-client system as witnessed by the four friends and played out in the poem. The hard-won cynical attitude to this system is the only gain that Catullus can record, at least in the

context of this poem. For not only do the four friends not receive any financial reward on account of their service abroad, but they also do not receive any of the benefits of *amicitia* expected on their return; in poem xlvii, Catullus describes vividly how that ‘circumcised Priapus’ Piso preferred other men and offered no invitations to Veranius and Fabullus, who were left out in the cold, literally and politically. Catullus ends poem xxviii with a curse on the two governors, addressed as *opprobria Romuli Remique* (‘disgraces on Romulus and Remus’).

The questions raised by these poems are numerous. Firstly, there is the issue of whether Catullus is attacking the client-patron system in general, or just his, and his friends’ own particular experience; is the attack purely personal or are there wider political dimensions? Secondly, how are we to view Catullus and his friends as portrayed by the poems; are they emasculated by their humiliating treatment and if so, is their treatment warranted by their servile behaviour as parasites? Connected to the last problem is the issue of whom we identify as those he terms *scabies famesque mundi* (‘the world’s Itch and Hunger’) in poem xlvii: are these men Veranius and Fabullus as well as Piso and Memmius? Finally there is the tone of the poems; is Catullus speaking with ‘a voice that could be characterized as hoarse with rage if only its diction were not so artful’⁶⁵ or is there a greater element of self-mockery, wryness or even cynicism here?

Wray sees a strong social comment in the poems: ‘The aristocratic political system of patron-client alliance is here characterized as a promiscuous economic exploitation (operating in both vertical directions), and that exploitation is in turn figured, at every turn, as brutally aggressive sexual penetration.’⁶⁶ Wray particularly emphasises the sexual content of this poem and poem xxix which he sees very much as linked to this poem: ‘Sexual violence is here imbedded in the poet’s personal history and in the Roman political order itself.’⁶⁷ This explanation does not completely fit with the tone of the poem,

however, as Catullus, although emasculated through the process of irrumation, does find the means to strike back at his oppressor with masculine aggression through the power of his invective verse; the 'client' is not so powerless as the image at first suggests. Poem xxix is also closely linked with poem xvi, where Catullus threatens to perform irrumation on others. The retaliatory aspect of the poem is important as the poem we have is the complete opposite of what would be expected, a parody of the poem by the grateful poet-client, for, even though independent to a large extent of patronage due to his own wealth, Catullus still sought powerful friends. In return for his place on Memmius' staff, Catullus ought to have written a poem glorifying his governor in some way. Instead we have the opposite, reflecting the power of the client to express his displeasure at the shortcomings of his patron. Furthermore, an aspect of the poems very evident to a modern audience is the irony of Catullus' complaint; he has been prevented from fleecing the province with the freedom he had hoped for. Such exploitation is precisely the subject of his criticism of Mamurra. Whether this irony would have been so clear to his contemporary audience and whether it is an intended message by Catullus is harder to say.⁶⁸

There is also the suggestion that the supine Catullus did not object in any strong manner to his oral rape; Memmius was able to take his time. This lack of protest on Catullus' part, almost amounting to complicity, reduces the brutal aggression that Wray speaks of, although not the power of the image. It should also be pointed out that it is not likely that Catullus meant his reader actually to believe that Memmius performed this sexual act. Even so, as Nappa points out, '[y]et the sexual activities must not be ignored; to do so robs the poems of both their power and their point.' He continues: 'Catullus has chosen highly charged descriptions of both himself and his friends to convey ideas not in themselves sexual.' Catullus accepts that he has been completely 'shafted' by Memmius, and that in part he asked for it by his submissive behaviour in seeking his friendship.

This relates to an aspect of the poem that Wray does not mention: its humour and the power of this humour. The image of Catullus making entries in his account book of life is clearly intended to be funny. The description of his oral rape is exaggerated for effect and therefore signals that it should not be taken literally; this reduces the brutality of the image. There is also heavy sarcasm in the words ‘Seek noble friends!’ Humour is also an aspect often overlooked in poem x, which also deals with Catullus’ Bithynian adventure. This poem portrays Catullus again telling a story against himself, laughing at the situation rather than being really cross with the woman who caught him out. While Wray is correct, therefore, to stress the object of attack – the breakdown in the process of *amicitia* witnessed by Catullus and his friends – he perhaps overplays Catullus’ rage against such exploitation in a general sense rather than the specific. It is also clear that no-one is portrayed positively in the two poems; all players including Roman men at large are emasculated and censured in turn in this poem. Catullus and his friends suffer irrumation, Caesar is explicitly ‘faggot Romulus’, the Roman everyman is a cuckold, while the penetrators are emasculated by their lack of control; for example Mamurra is portrayed as physically enervated (xxix 13 *diffututa mentula*). There is no clear, didactic message, therefore to the two poems.

If we consider Catullus reacting in a personal way to events in the normal manner of politically minded males in the Roman élite, then the tone of poems xxviii and xlvii would reflect a strong personal disappointment for Catullus and his friends, for which Catullus amply achieves personal revenge through these poems. As politics depended on the cult of the individual, this is in no way arguing any reduction in the political message of the poems; the poem can be political without having to attack political institutions. He attacks the individual politicians involved, making clear his view that he considers the actions of Memmius to be wrong. This does not mean he is necessarily attacking the

system behind Memmius. There is rueful, self-mocking wit speaking for an experience expensively won and the virility of the verse allows Catullus to get away with portraying himself in a compromising position. His sarcastic 'seek noble friends' is a broader attack on the obstacles put in the way of those like himself and his friends who are trying to work their way up the political ladder without the automatic networks available to the most noble and influential families of Rome. His attack, while broader, is still on the personal level however: it is aimed at those such as Memmius and Piso who abuse the system rather than against the system of *amicitia* itself. Roman politics worked by such personal attacks just as much, if not more, as by adopting political platforms on issues such as corn distribution or reform of the tribunate.

An alternative view would be to see Catullus manipulating a character called 'Catullus' to show up the inequities of the client/patron system and the way such patron can exploit their clients. This would be Catullus reacting in a more impersonal way and with considerable insight and judgement into the nature of the social structures of his day. Nappa, for example, makes the point that poems x, xxviii and xlvii offer an indictment of the system of political advancement that was so open to abuse: 'Catullus paints a portrait of himself and his circle which conforms not to the Roman ideal of freeborn masculine behaviour, but perhaps to its reality.'⁶⁹ The sexual content is there 'to show that the stereotypes of virility and honor, of military duty and military glory, were breaking down.'⁷⁰ Vinson has a similar view: 'Poem 28, however, is not about personal revenge but political statement, and Catullus' object in transforming invective convention is to create a new mode of political commentary...by virtue of the shock and outrage at the disparity between traditional Roman ideals and their contemporary practice.'⁷¹

The idea of Catullus using a persona also called 'Catullus' would be a complete change from the literary use of persona before him, as I discussed in chapter 1. That is not

an objection to the theory in itself but needs addressing as part of such a theory. While Catullus as a provincial outsider may have viewed Roman institutions in a slightly different light to those born and bred to them, the problem with this image of Catullus is that he shows no provincial insight into the wrongs of the exploitation of provincials that Memmius in fact prevented. As Catullus makes clear in poem x, no-one got much out of Bithynia. This lack of sympathy with the provincials is particularly striking as Catullus came from a province where abuses of power would have taken place and he would have had first hand knowledge of what real powers a governor had in his province through his *imperium*, and what the practical likelihood of accountability or redress was; it was only a few years later, in 50 BC, that Marcellus had a local senator from the citizen colony of Novum Comum flogged in order to insult Caesar and remind him that the Transpadanes did not enjoy full citizenship.⁷²

Another problem with this view is that the Romans were always harking back to a golden age, as I argued earlier. The Roman élite had always been distrustful of *novi homines*, with many actually resentful of any advancement by men of superior talent, but inferior social standing to their own. It was Cicero the new man who worked at a successful relationship with Appius Claudius the patrician noble, suffering at times abominable rudeness. Marius's whole career was 'a symbol of the claims of personal merit against the inherited supremacy of a corrupt and incompetent ruling clique.'⁷³ The client/patron relationship had never been an ideal one, and Catullus and his friends were suffering what many before them had experienced. Catullus' depiction of unfair treatment would come as no shock to his audience; it would have been a familiar picture for much of the mid to late Republic. The traditional and contemporary divide is therefore in itself part of idealistic discourse and not a reflection of reality.

What might have had some shock value is the sexual description that Catullus uses. The problem with seeing this as a telling blow against the system, where sexual exploitation symbolises systemic exploitation, is that the audience contemporary with Catullus was unlikely to react in the same way as a modern audience. To feel concern for men effeminised by the system, they would have to get beyond their immediate reaction of contempt for those portrayed as effeminate, prostrate, irrumated, and to an extent compliant with such treatment. This was unlikely to happen with the majority of the Roman audience. Modern sympathies are out of kilter here.

Conversely, a Roman audience might not see in poem xlvii any reference to negative, parasitic behaviour in Catullus' portrayal of Veranius and Fabullus as argued by Skinner.⁷⁴ As Nappa comments: 'In the Roman system of patronage, seeking *nobiles amicos* is carried out precisely by hunting up invitations.'⁷⁵ To the modern audience it is difficult to see what is the defining behaviour that makes Porcius and Socraton *scabies famesque mundi* ('the world's Itch and Hunger') while Veranius and Fabullus are allowed to seek out invitations indiscriminately on street corners without apparently demeaning themselves.⁷⁶ Juvenal's third satire is useful in explaining the distinctions whereby honest Romans were impoverished clients, and such as Porcius and Socraton prosperous parasites; personal viewpoint and various forms of discrimination were key aspects of this. From Catullus' own poems we know that Veranius and Fabullus had a long standing relationship with Piso, including membership of his provincial *cohors*. They would be justified, therefore, in expecting an invitation, effectively earned by this prior association. Instead they have been ousted by new favourites who can throw their own parties, and it seems more likely, therefore, that Catullus expected the outraged sympathy of his reader at poor treatment of *amici* rather than condemnation of his friends' behaviour as parasitic.⁷⁷ This is backed up by Catullus' ironic portrayal of himself in poem xlv, where his desire to

become a guest (xliv, 10: *conviva*) of Sestius led to his receiving a bad cold from reading his speeches. It is the unsuitability of Sestius as a friend that Catullus is pointing out, not the unsuitability of his seeking dinner engagements with relatively powerful people. There is no joke by Catullus the poet against ‘Catullus’ the patron-seeker here.

The issue of whether Catullus portrays his friends negatively in poem xlvii has also opened a debate on the last lines of poem xxviii: Nappa has argued that the ‘disgraces on Romulus and Remus’ refers to Veranius and Fabullus rather than Piso and Memmius.⁷⁸ This is, however, highly unlikely. Even if Catullus is speaking through a persona, this would require a complete change of tone or narrator in the final two lines from the rest of the poem which recounts the shared misfortunes of the speaker and his best friends whom he addresses most affectionately (*Verani optime tuque mi Fabulle*). It is also clear that the final lines, addressing two men, continue from the sentiment of finding noble friends, coming immediately before it. Nappa’s interpretation would also require the narrator to be addressing himself as he has acted and been acted upon in the same way as his friends.

There is a possibility that there is more than one way to read this poem (xxviii), and that Catullus is aiming it at one level at a narrower audience of young Hellenized men such as himself who would see beyond the humour and bravado. As I discussed in the last chapter, such men had different ideas on masculinity, and would be more likely to view Catullus as a victim despite his effeminate pose. To such and those like them, Catullus’ portrayal would be more challenging; they would find his situation as exploited victim sympathetic, yet the language of compliance would make them uneasy. Would they accept such treatment in return for political advancement? Is such dishonourable treatment an inevitable part of the career of *novi homines*? It is possible therefore that Catullus had an agenda of changing the hearts and minds of his generation in regard to treatment of *amici* and clients. In general, however, it is not necessary to assume that Catullus was

deliberately exposing contradictory aspects of life in the late Republic. Rather in reflecting real life in his various poems, he portrayed society as it was; full of contradictions and tensions regarding masculinity, corruption, and personal power seeking.

Before leaving these poems, there is another very different interpretation that is worth reconsidering; that of Braund mentioned in the introduction. Braund argues that Catullus was actually a friend of Memmius' and was pre-empting likely court action for extortion by portraying Memmius as being in tight control of his cohorts and taking little from the province himself. There are some problems, however, with this argument. Firstly, Braund makes the assumption that Catullus uses a persona called 'Catullus'. This treatment would have been highly innovative in itself which may have got in the way of the message. Secondly, in poem xxviii there is no clear message that Memmius himself did not make money. While he may have restrained his staff, the inference of his abuse of his staff, portrayed through Catullus' irrumation, is that Memmius would have been likely to abuse his province as well. Finally, while Memmius's *cohors* gained little, Piso, with whom he is paired in poem xxviii, does appear to have made money from his province; in poem xlvii Porcius and Socraton, his favourites, have plenty of money. While I do not think Braund's interpretation is correct, it provides a useful insight into how poems could influence the political scene. Catullus' poem therefore discredited both governors, both of whom expected to face charges of provincial mismanagement when they returned home. Catullus' accusations of lack of *fides* towards their *cohors* could also be used to challenge their integrity in other areas.

Catullus' poems against Memmius and Piso are clearly poems with political intent. The arguments set out above are investigating the nature of that political attack, not the fact that they are political. I have also treated each poem on an individual basis, or as small groups of obviously closely related poems, rather than considering the collection as a

whole. This I have presumed would reflect their initial publication through recitation at dinner parties or as individual papyri or tablets circulated among friends.⁷⁹ As a collection, some different messages emerge, and these may be more in line with some of Vinson's arguments; for example, she is surely right to make the comparison between Memmius and Lesbia; both put Catullus into an effeminate position, and both short-change him as an *amicus*. Both could have offered useful support to an ambitious young man, but this support was not forthcoming; Catullus attacks both, emphasizing the lack of reciprocal rewards from the relationships. The employment of *amicitia*, however, as a concept useful in portraying a sexual relationship based on affection, mutual benefit, and above all trust does not fit well with the notion that Catullus is attacking the breakdown of the institution of *amicitia* in his poems about Memmius. It is corruption of *amicitia* by individuals that Catullus attacks, whether by incestuous relations between the Clodii, by misguided generosity by Caesar towards Mamurra, or by a lack of generosity by Memmius and Piso. As *amicitia* was a fundamental social and political institution, Catullus's poems naturally speak on a social and political level, but without necessarily any comment on the institutions involved.

Another up and coming politician whom Catullus attacks is Vatinius. Like Mamurra, he became an associate of Caesar. He was not an obvious highflier, and his early career certainly did not mark him out as a consular hopeful; he took several attempts to win the quaestorship, the least competitive office, and even then came at the bottom of the poll.⁸⁰ Despite this he was openly ambitious; Cicero reports that he was already talking about his expectation of holding the consulship during this quaestorship.⁸¹ He marked out his support for the triumvirs during his tribunate in 59 by sponsoring the legislation that gave Caesar his extraordinary command in Gaul and recognised Pompey's settlement in the East. Caesar's reciprocal support was not sufficient, however, to gain

him the place in the augural college made vacant by the death of Metellus Celer that year, nor the praetorship at his first attempt in the elections in 57. He was successful, however, in the elections of 56 for the praetorship for 55. At the same time, he may also have received reassurance from the triumvirs that they would support him in a bid for the consulship at the conference at Luca.⁸² Vatinius's political career was also dogged by setbacks in the courts; he was in and out of the courts on a variety of charges during these years. In 58, following his tribunate, he was charged under the *lex Licinia Iunia*, but escaped due to Clodius breaking up the court. In March 56, he was a witness against Sestius and suffered the full eloquence of not only Cicero, but also Calvus as they sought to discredit him.⁸³ Following his praetorship, he was charged with illegal electioneering practices, and this time Cicero was persuaded by the triumvirs to appear for the defence. Calvus may have appeared for the prosecution, pursuing his well-known vendetta against Vatinius.

Cicero's action in defending Vatinius cost him dearly in mental anguish and his own sense of integrity. It was possibly the trigger for Catullus' only poem addressed to the great orator. Cicero is called the *optimus omnium patronus*, (xlix 7: 'best advocate/patron of all'), which could be taken in three ways. Firstly, Catullus could be being straightforwardly complimentary, and these last words of the poem are reiterating the grand language of the first three, *disertissime Romuli nepotum* (xlix 1: 'most eloquent of Romulus' grandsons').⁸⁴ To call Cicero, a new man, a grandson of Romulus is complimentary in itself, but to call him the most eloquent is high praise. Calling himself the worst poet could be false modesty, raising Cicero even higher by comparison. It would not be unnatural for Catullus to feel friendly towards Cicero and it is probable that the two men knew each other; Cicero worked alongside Calvus on several occasions⁸⁵ and his supporters included Hortensius Hortalus and L Torquatus, both of whom are addressed

positively in individual poems by Catullus.⁸⁶ Furthermore, equestrians from all over Italy were known to support Cicero and there is no reason to suppose Cisalpine equestrians an exception to this.

A very different reading would lead from Catullus not really meaning that he was the worst poet.⁸⁷ This would alter the meaning of the last two lines considerably; Cicero is only the best advocate as far as Catullus is the worst poet. The extravagance of the praise of the first two lines could then be poking fun at Cicero's own high opinion of himself. This may pick up on remarks made by Cicero about the style of poetry written by Catullus and his friends. We know that he referred disparagingly to the neoteric poets and *cantores Euphoriones*, although these comments were written in the next decade.⁸⁸

A third reading would be to take the first lines as complimentary; Catullus has something to thank Cicero for, despite Cicero perhaps referring to Catullus as a bad poet (*pessimus omnium poeta*). This judgement of Cicero's may have referred more to Catullus' choice of subject matter than his poetic skills – the 'what' rather than the 'how'. Catullus then turns the tables on Cicero, saying that he is as much the worst of poets, as Cicero is the best advocate of all and sundry. This last phrase would attack Cicero for his being cajoled into defending such men as Vatinius against his better judgement. Catullus' attack would then refer to the type of man he defends rather than his oratorical skills, again the 'what' rather than the 'how'. All three interpretations are possible, but one thing that is clear is that Catullus addressed a key political figure of Rome in a familiar, even mischievous tone.

At one of the trials involving Vatinius, or soon after, it is possible that Catullus involved himself in the blackening of Vatinius' name by circulating poem liii. In this poem, he refers to Calvus' masterful rendition of Vatinius' *crimina*, a term which assumes his guilt, and speaks of the effect of Calvus' speech on one of the spectators whom

Catullus deliberately does not name (liii 1 *nescioquem*). As I mentioned in chapter 2, this unnamed person is likely to be Vatinius himself. Catullus therefore makes his support of Calvus against Vatinius very clear, and derides Vatinius by the first two words of the poem: he openly mocks him (liii 1: *risi*) and uses a belittling term rather than his name. Catullus is similarly disrespectful to Vatinius in poem xiv, when he jokingly refers to 'Vatinian hatred' in connection with Calvus, using his name adjectivally in an irreverent manner in connection with second-rate poets.

Cicero's involvement highlights the connection of Vatinius with the triumvirs. Attacks in court against someone like Vatinius should be seen as directly related to the men whom he supported when in office, and who supported him to gain such office. Such attacks struck at their all-important public image. As Gruen commented upon the situation in 55 BC for Caesar and Pompey: 'Their public image remained a prime consideration. The trials of 55 and 54 were carefully calculated to tarnish that image.'⁸⁹ Catullus's poem liii sees him very much involved in this aspect of life in Rome, ostensibly attending court and commenting on court proceedings in occasional poems which would no doubt have entertained dinner parties during and after the event.

In assessing Catullus' role, it is important to emphasise that the triumvirate of Pompey, Crassus and Caesar in no way dominated Rome either after 59 or after the conference in Luca in 56. Gruen has argued the point strongly,⁹⁰ commenting that it was only with the employment of considerable force that Pompey and Crassus were able to achieve their own election to the consulship of 55 and that of their supporters to other offices for that year: 'In 56, however, the triumvirs thwarted in recent electoral contests, mobilized all their resources to obtain sympathetic magistrates for the following year.... The dynasts shoved most of their favourites through, but only at the cost of some violence; Pompey returned home, his toga splattered with blood.'⁹¹ Violence and intimidation may

temporarily have worked for the triumvirs, but the opposition could retaliate through the courts. Between 56 and 54, Gruen has identified thirteen *amici* or *clientes* of the triumvirs facing prosecution.⁹² Elections after 55 proved an even tougher battle. Memmius, Catullus' former governor, despite his reconciliation with Caesar, failed in his bid for the consulship of 54, along with the other candidate backed by the triumvirate.⁹³ The following year, P Plautius Hypsaesus, failed, despite his long term association with Pompey, and, worse still, was indicted under Pompey's own law, the *lex Pompeia de ambitu*, with the great man powerless to protect him.⁹⁴ As I mentioned in the last chapter, poem xxxii about a woman Catullus calls by the unusual name of Ipsit(h)illa may be a veiled attack on this man. These associates of Catullus were in no way on the peripheries of politics.

In this battle for election, it is not surprising that Vatinius failed to achieve his ambition. He had to wait a long time and for a very different political climate for his election to happen; his consulship was not until 47 BC, and as discussed in chapter 2, this is the most probable date for poem lii. Catullus' most overt attack on Vatinius would therefore come at a point when he was at his most powerful and at the most prestigious moment in his career. The method of attack is simple and traditional; Catullus attacks his lack of senatorial credentials and emphasises his new-man status by linking him with another new man who holds a curule office, Nonius.⁹⁵ While it is in effect also an attack on Caesar as the supporter and elevator of such men, compared to the earlier poems attacking Mamurra, this aspect is not emphasised. It is hard to see how the tone could be anything other than highly pessimistic. Even if ironic, there is a bitterness unalleviated by any joke or wordplay. The poem is only four lines long, and one of these is repeated word for word. Within these lines, there is verbal repetition, reducing the scope for expansion of ideas even further. The lines are almost prosaic; apart from *struma*, they are not even

entertaining by their insults. Instead, Catullus informs his reader that they hold positions of power, and the reader is left to infer by Catullus' morbid reaction that they are unworthy of such offices.

The poem is no less powerful for such simplicity; the repeated 'quid' falls like hammer blows. Lee tries to give the sense of the assonance of *moraris emori* through his alliterative translation: 'Why defer decease?' The highly pessimistic tone may be in part explained by Vatinius' survival both politically and physically, whereas Catullus' close friend Calvus, the attacker of Vatinius in poem liii, was probably dead.⁹⁶ The laughter of poem liii has passed with the passing of Calvus. It is also possible that this poem reflects the growing disillusionment and lack of real power for those outside the magic circle during the early forties. The political situation was far removed from the battle between the triumvirs and the various opposing elements in the fifties which, while increasingly violent, had been highly vigorous. For Catullus, there is no scope for active engagement as in his poetic involvement at a trial of Vatinius. Instead, Catullus suggests that he can no longer have anything to live for in the Rome of Caesar's dictatorship.

Another poem which has more negativity the more one delves beneath its surface is poem lxiv. Catullus has made several changes to the various traditions he draws upon, and these are invariably darker in spirit and far more pessimistic in tone. As mentioned in chapter 2, one such change is the geographical location of the poem, from Mount Pelion to Pharsalus, which suggests strongly that this poem, like poem lii about Vatinius would date from the forties. Pharsalus to contemporaries was without doubt connected with the battle which saw Pompey, a great general of Rome, defeated by a fellow Roman not a barbarian enemy, along with many Romans soldiers killed by their erstwhile companions-in-arms. In line with this destructive setting, Catullus substitutes the physically repulsive Parcae for

the attractive Graces and their story of Achilles emphasises death and destruction not heroism. Even a mortal's marriage to a divine god is given a negative spin.

The appearance of Pharsalus as a deserted, abandoned place is easy to miss in the positive tone Catullus gives to the opening of the poem. When the reader reconsiders the image Catullus has presented, however, the exaggeration of the description is striking. For an agrarian society the harmful effects of the neglect would have been even more apparent; the damage done by leaving trees unpruned and vines unweeded could not be remedied overnight. This flawed picture reflects badly on the marriage between Peleus and Thetis, a mortal man and divine nymph. Amid neglect and ruin stands the sumptuous palace of the King. The setting may also suggest another man, descended from a beautiful goddess and mortal man; Julius Caesar. Catullus then describes a coverlet within this opulent home, which portrays the virtues of heroes (lxiv 51: *heroum...virtutes indicat*). The virtue particularly displayed is the abandonment of Ariadne by the triumphant Theseus. Is there a hint of Caesar in this careless hero? The lament of Theseus' father and to some extent that of Ariadne, have an additional poignancy when related in this setting, the site of so many recent Roman deaths; many fathers would have lamented the doubtful doom (lxiv, 216: *dubios...casus*) of the civil war. Furthermore, the Parcae's song emphasises the sheer slaughter of Achilles, with the hyperbolic image of bodies and blood choking the Hellespont (lxiv 357f). The ending of the poem emphasises the moral corruption of contemporary times, but holds even greater pessimism when the reader realises that the so called 'golden age' was just as guilty of such crimes.

Catullus' longest poem is fairly unremitting in its negativity therefore; its primary message is that the golden age is over, and since its passing, all manner of crimes have been committed. On further investigation, even this golden age contains filial betrayal, broken promises of marriage, wholesale slaughter, the death of innocents, and careful

segregation of divine and mortal. The mythical age portrayed by Catullus appears to be more comparable with his contemporary life; the mortal throng is like the crowd of *amici* and *clientes* who attend the rich at Rome. The opulence of the King's palace compares badly with the agrarian wilderness outside and verges on decadence; the tenements of Rome were very different to the houses of the élite at Rome, whose power and wealth had become growingly more visible and exclusive through material competition. There is no overt political message, but the implication of the destruction of the battle of Pharsalus, physically, mentally and morally is unmissable. Along with poem lii, there is a pessimism rather than the jaunty, often outrageous attacks of his earlier poetry.

It is to those earlier poems I return to consider the other unknowns, such as the Nonius attacked alongside Vatinius. There are many names in Catullus that we cannot identify securely with known historical political personages, such as Egnatius or Arrius, or which do not occur in our other sources for the time, but are presented by Catullus in an overtly political milieu. Some of the latter already mentioned are Otho, Libo and Fuficius who are associated with Caesar by Catullus in poem liv. We may add Antius in poem xlv, whose candidacy was apparently backed by Sestius in a speech that made Catullus ill. Some like Naso may be political as Catullus' poem mentions that he 'goes down' (cxii 2 *descendit*), a word associated with the forum for either business or politics.⁹⁷ Other unknowns are not linked to political figures or presented in a political context, and so the political intentions in poems concerning them are impossible to judge.

Before dismissing the possibility that such intentions are present, it is useful to consider two points. Firstly, I have argued above for clear links between political poems about Caesar and poems about Furius and Aurelius, not otherwise obviously political. Secondly, the *prima classis* at Rome was far more extensive than often assumed. It is common to discuss the *comitia centuriata* as being dominated by the senate and *equites* as

the first ninety-eight centuries were dominated by men of wealth. The financial qualification, however, was not equivalent to that for those ranks, but far lower, arguably ten times lower according to Millar.⁹⁸ It is possible that such men as the bath thieves, Vibennius, father and son (poem xxxiii), Thallus, the stealer of napkins and face-towels (poem xxv) were not so dissimilar in their voting *classis* as the other filcher of napkins, Marrucine Asinius (poem xii). Attacks on rivals for Lesbia's affections should also be put in the context of her patrician background; such men as Ravidus (poem xl) and Gellius (xci among others) clearly had an entrée into her society.

Attempts to vilify and blacken character publicly could well be behind these poems, and a political perspective allows poems such as xliv to take on a new light. This is apparently a poem about Catullus' farm, which may be either the more fashionable Tiburtan or less prestigious Sabine. It is also a joke about how he caught a cold by reading a bad speech by Sestius about Antius' candidacy. Sestius was fulfilling a key role of an *amicus*, while Catullus is indirectly but very clearly showing his disapproval of both Sestius and Antius; the speech is full of poison and pestilence (xliv 12 *plenam veneni et pestilentiae*). Bearing in mind that oratory was one of the three ways to get to political power – the others being military and legal success – and election to office the embodiment of that power, it is clear that Catullus' poem is an attack on the prestige and political careers of both men. Whether Antius was successful we do not know; this poem could either be an attempt to undermine his candidacy before an election, or to attack his prestige after the event. The farm is a side issue, but one which conveniently points out Catullus' own wealth through the mention of his farm in a highly desirable area close to Rome and separate from his other real estate in Cisalpine Gaul (also mentioned in the poems).

Catullus attacked Clodius through the accusation of the impure mouth (*os impurum*) in poem lxxix, with the insinuation of oral intercourse, an effeminate act highly unsuited to Roman élite males as I discussed in the last chapter. This is possibly also the insinuation against Egnatius in poem xxxix as he is described as having suspiciously clean teeth, implying that he has to keep washing them, as well as the more obvious jibe that as a Celtiberian he uses urine to do so. Gellius the rival for Lesbia's affections is also attacked more overtly for this vice in poem lxxx.

For the most part Catullus' attacks on such men as these would have provoked their hostility, but little real danger beyond this. His ability and willingness to provoke far more powerful men is the final issue that I wish to address in this chapter. Catullus' impunity to attack at will and his assumption of free speech is easily taken for granted, but both merit further consideration in the context of the fifties BC. As mentioned above, Catullus' attacks ranged more widely than Caesar and Mamurra, and this emphasises further the risks he must have undergone. Cicero provoked Clodius, and Clodius did not stop at Cicero's exile in his pursuit of revenge; he even attacked Cicero's brother's house as part of his harassment of the ex-consul.⁹⁹ As Burl comments: Cicero's career, even his life, were at risk.... Yet it was with carefree impunity that the upper-class Catullus could be just as rude to Clodius, calling him 'Lesbius' and Clodia 'Lesbia'.¹⁰⁰ Cicero took care to make it clear that he was in no way making an attack on Caesar when he impeached Piso for mismanagement of his provincial command in Macedonia in about September 55; Catullus felt no need to make any such clarification in his attacks on Piso. Indeed, given Catullus' direct attacks on Caesar, it would have been superfluous. While Caesar's own liberality, attacked in poem xxix, as *sinistra liberalitas* in dealing with Mamurra's profligacy, may have given Catullus some confidence to attack him, Mamurra himself may not have been so ready to forgive.¹⁰¹

The career of the poet A Licinius Archias makes a useful comparison to Catullus. A Greek poet from Antioch, he claimed Roman citizenship in 89 without incident, but was indicted for falsely claiming citizenship many years later, in 62, at which trial he was defended by Cicero. His real crime was his work celebrating L Lucullus' achievements in Asia – a work not at all in line with Pompey's fame there. While he was not a political figure himself, his work impinged on the political sphere: 'There can be little doubt that the trial was designed as a pointed thrust at the coterie that had patronized Archias.'¹⁰² Archias himself was a political pawn. Catullus, a Cisalpine provincial on the attack rather than praising, must have been equally if not more at risk.

Theoretically his enemies could retaliate through the courts: defamation of character through song or verse was indicted in the Twelve Tables, with the penalty of death.¹⁰³ We have seen in the last chapter, however, how the laws against adultery and relations with adult males were largely ignored and it appears to have been the same for élite Romans such as Catullus who practised defamation. Wray argues that few politicians would risk using the legal protection, either under the Twelve Tables, or more generally under laws against *iniuriae*, as laughter was also a key aspect of the legal system; if a defending orator could raise ridicule against the plaintiff, handled skilfully, this could be as effective as providing defensive evidence.¹⁰⁴ He concludes that Caesar would not have risked being a figure of fun in court if he arraigned Catullus.

Informal redress was, however, readily available. In part this was sanctioned by the law: adultery, for example, put the male perpetrator's life and body into the power of the injured husband. With no police force and frequent riots in Rome, 'accidents' could easily happen. To an offended Roman élite male, these could seem 'reasonable' steps.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Gruen's analysis of urban violence stresses the use of retainers rather than the *plebs urbana*, the urban poor in general.¹⁰⁶ This again emphasises the dangers Catullus

chose to face if street violence was organised by patrons rather than random acts of violence by the city mob. Where invective cut deep, for example, with accusations of effeminacy, there were undoubtedly dangers in making such attacks. Caesar could easily have suggested to Clodius that it would be in both their interests if Catullus were silenced.

As the fifties progressed, violence and aggression increased in Rome and invective verse became significantly more dangerous. Millar argues on the basis of Cicero's speeches that the period 64-50 'was to see greatly intensified threats of physical violence, as well as complex debates and controversies over the constitution, over the exploitation of enormously increased overseas resources deriving from conquest, and over proposals about land distribution. Questions of internal regulation, of the limits of individual power and public status, and of the exploitation of the empire had become closely entangled.'¹⁰⁷ These are precisely the subjects that Catullus' poetry contends with too. Even within this period, we can note change between the relative freedom early in the fifties to the last years of the decade, when violence was greatly increased; for example, in 52 mob intimidation affected even Cicero in court and he was unsuccessful in his defence of Milo. The personal bravery shown by Catullus should not, therefore, be underestimated: 'The potential dangers of incurring the wrath of the powerful were so well recognised that those prepared to risk it were held in considerable awe.'¹⁰⁸

How then do we explain the freedom with which Catullus appears to have written his invective verse? Wray argues that Catullus' verse should be seen in the context of a general assumption of free speech: 'An important aspect of...social performance (with a longstanding Roman tradition of *dicacitas* behind it) had been the relatively free exchange of spoken and written invective, a lively commerce of wit.' This, he argues, 'if it did not set all its players on a precisely equal footing, had at least emboldened Catullus to direct some of his most scathing barbs against Caesar's favorites, and Caesar's own person.'¹⁰⁹

The English poet Chaucer makes an interesting comparison; also an élite poet writing in the vernacular, his satirical attacks upon the church were welcome entertainment in the court of Richard II. These attacks, however, made him powerful enemies. Under Henry IV, with a very different political climate, Chaucer disappears from view; he is the father of English literature, yet we know nothing about how he died, where, or when. His tomb is a memorial, built long after his death.¹¹⁰ Similarly, Augustus was not nearly as restrained as Caesar; he was the first to prosecute libel under the treason law, and took action against individuals.¹¹¹ As Edwards points out: ‘Cassius Severus’ works were publicly burned, their author exiled.’¹¹² Augustus’ reaction was more in line with the normal Roman reaction against enemies: Catullus had before him the example of Sulla who exacted bitter and extensive revenge on his enemies both senatorial and equestrian through his proscriptions. Catullus could not have known just how liberal Caesar might be. It is also worth pointing out that Caesar’s liberality was also probably more apparent after the civil war than earlier in his career. The good opinion of the King’s court had protected Chaucer at first, and it is possible that public opinion went some way to providing a shield for Catullus; reprisals might not be viewed positively, and taking notice of an attack could be construed as confirming its truth. Relying on the fickle crowd was a risky business, however.

Dixon speaks of greater restrictions on freedom of speech than Wray implies; ‘Speech was very free – at least, for the powerful and for anonymous pamphleteers, both of whom cheerfully accused opponents of a vivid range of vices.’¹¹³ Given what we know of Cicero’s fate for speaking against Clodius in court, freedom of speech within these constraints seems more plausible. We have then to decide into which group we fit Catullus, the anonymous or the powerful?

We do not know how Catullus circulated his verses, nor whether it was widely known who had written them. On the question of whether those attacked knew the poet's identity, we can be more definite. Caesar and Mamurra, for example, would have known their attacker, although not necessarily straightaway. Poem xliii gives his identity away as it compares *Lesbia nostra* with Aemeana, the girlfriend, or so it appears, of Mamurra and Catullus frequently names himself in connection with Lesbia. Clodius too would have been quickly aware of who was responsible for these attacks on his family, and in the case of poem lxxix, against himself. Memmius would only have to look to his own *cohors* in Bithynia to have an idea of who might be responsible for the attacks against him; Piso likewise would not long have been in the dark. These poems are not therefore the work of anonymous pamphleteers. Are they then the work of a powerful man?

Catullus is not often viewed as a powerful man, but the inference seems clear. The only real protection came from a substantial personal bodyguard provided either from one's own means or from that of powerful friends, or a combination of the two. Catullus' invectives would have made him friends among the élite of Rome, who as enemies of Caesar were also attacking him through the normal channels of senatorial opposition. Rather bizarrely to modern thinking, Catullus would have found favour not just with Caesar's enemies, but also with some of his friends who saw the need to restrain him in the traditional manner of the élite. As Edwards points out: 'Attacks on morality were used by the Roman élite to exercise control over its own members and to justify its privileged position.' She continues; 'accusations and descriptions of immorality were implicated in defining what it meant to be a member of the Roman élite, in excluding outsiders from this powerful and privileged group and in controlling insiders.'¹¹⁴ Catullus' invectives can be seen to be within this tradition, especially in view of the ambivalence he shows towards Caesar; Mamurra is the corrupting outsider who is to blame, Catullus insinuates. Viewed

in this way, Catullus' poems would show him to be on the inside, a member of the élite, rather than a provincial outsider.

It is possible that Caesar himself became one of his protectors: if we interpret his references to Caesar in poem xi as reflecting his recent reconciliation, then his invective against Clodius directly and through Catullus' attacks on his sister Clodia would most likely date after his reconciliation with Caesar. Caesar's liberality and *auctoritas* may even have been part of Catullus' protection against such as Clodius. It may even suggest a motive for Catullus agreeing to end his feud with Caesar; in taking the risk of attacking Clodius, he would have gained great notoriety and awe, but the situation may have become too hot to handle. The harm done by Catullus' invectives was a key motive for Caesar's reconciliation, and this gives a hint as to how Catullus may have made other important friends and received their backing: an ability to affect public opinion was a powerful weapon.

I have mentioned above various ways in which Catullus' poetry could be circulated more widely than to his immediate friends; for example, via the forum and as verses for claquers at trials and in the theatre. The audience in such cases included the crowd at Rome or mob as they are often referred to. They, with the rest of the citizen body, held, in theory, the legislative power, through their votes at Rome. Millar has recently reassessed the actual power of the crowd at Rome by considering census figures against free monthly corn dole figures to ascertain the percentage of the voting body resident in or near Rome.¹¹⁵ He suggests that those who were able to come to Rome to collect the corn dole would also be able to come to Rome to vote and he points out that the census figure in 70 BC was 900 000 or 910 000.¹¹⁶ This figure he compares with the free monthly corn figures. Initiated by Clodius in 58, by 46 it was 320 000 and he comments that it 'seems clear...that something like one-third of the total numbers of Roman citizens must have

lived either in Rome itself (however defined) or sufficiently near to be able to collect a ration of corn once a month.’¹¹⁷

This means that there was a vast audience for political canvassing, and a huge degree of support to be gained or lost. Catullus’ political poems could therefore have a far greater role than otherwise assumed if they were circulated to this crowd with the aim of influencing opinion. That they would appeal is likely. As Millar commented: ‘the Forum...was usually full of idle observers or casual passers-by.’¹¹⁸ While I am not suggesting that 300 000 citizens passed through the forum on a regular basis or attended trials or speeches, it is important not to underestimate the importance of these potential voters. Nor should we forget the less wealthy of the *prima classis* as potential audience. A damaging poem by a man of some standing might reach much further than we might otherwise assume; it would have a correspondingly greater potential to do harm. As Millar argued: ‘[I]t has to be stressed that all these forms of individualistic competition [competition for office, glory, and subsequent reputation and influence] were directed to an audience of the people, and that no one could gain any public office without direct popular election, whether through the *comitia centuriata* or the *comitia tributa*.’¹¹⁹

The fifties BC also saw changes in the handling of legislation by the state. Millar continues: ‘More important still, changes in the *res publica*, new forms of exploitation of the empire, and the new structures of military command required the voting of a *lex* by the people in the Forum. The people were the arbiters of success and failure, and they alone could validate structural change.’¹²⁰ In particular, during Caesar’s consulship in 59 BC, the *comitiae* were called on to pass laws on a wide range of issues that previously had been very much the domain of the Senate.¹²¹ In this atmosphere, highly persuasive speakers, opinion makers and politically inspired poets could make a mark. Bibulus’ action in publishing his edicts reminds us that popular support was not automatically given to

popular politicians like Caesar. Furthermore the presence of consuls such as Caesar and Bibulus in Rome during their year of office rather than campaigning abroad highlighted the conflict within the ruling class. Of course it can be argued that the career of Milo and the use of tribunes by both sides shows how the people at Rome could be manipulated by optimates as well as popular politicians, but nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the people held a particular importance in the decade of the fifties; they were worth manipulating.¹²²

This was the particular historical background to Catullus' political poems and in this chapter, I have argued the case for recognising their contribution as an integral part of the competition, libellous abuse, and vivacity that was Roman politics in the fifties. In the unique situation of his time, Catullus sought to use a new method of gaining reputation and power. Wiseman argued that: 'In the Republic, when election to magistracies and therefore to the Senate was in the hands of the people, it was their attention the new man had to win to make his name known, but the methods were the same.'¹²³ The three standard routes to power he mentions are as a general, orator or lawyer. It is arguable, however, that Catullus saw an opportunity to use his position as a poet to make his name. While Catullus' contemporary Sallust saw his literary career as very much second best to holding office and a clear sign of his retirement from a public role, he still defended the writing of history as a public service. Catullus could argue for a very much more active role for his poetry, even that it could provide the means to attain office, not simply compensation for giving up office.¹²⁴ Edwards argued that 'A life devoted to literature and contemplation was often elided with a life devoted to pleasure. Neither was appropriate for an honourable Roman who should view his duties to the state as paramount.'¹²⁵ There is nothing in the poetry of Catullus to suggest that he had devoted his entire life to literature; rather the diverse subject matter of his poems, the account of his trip to Bithynia,

his friendship with Calvus, a political aspirant also writing verses, are all indications that Catullus was a typical Roman élite male whose literary talents happened to be particularly acute.¹²⁶ There is also nothing in the subsequent literature that criticises Catullus for a lack of interest in office, or that makes any distinction between him and his political friends, Calvus and Cinna.

In chapter 2, I discussed the realistic ambitions of Catullus, pointing out that for a *novus homo*, the quaestorship with its automatic entry into the senate would be a great achievement and for many new men, their whole career objective. The earliest Catullus could hope to stand would be between 57 and 54, depending on his birth date, but as a new man, he would not expect to be elected ‘in his year’, that is at this earliest point, but possibly several years later, after he had had time as a mature man to build up his support base. Bithynia apparently failed to provide money or a patron, but did still serve as the first step to office in terms of experience. Subsequently, through his poetry and particularly his invective verse, Catullus gained a name for himself, and caused sufficient annoyance that even men such as Caesar sought to gain his friendship. The reconciliation was probably not long after the conference at Luca, where the alliance and the benefits of supporting the alliance were far more obvious than the arrangements in 60 BC. Epstein may provide a clue to Catullus’ change of heart: ‘As a result of the paramount role political ambition played in the life of the Roman aristocrat, the pursuit of *inimicitia* usually gave way when it conflicted with an opportunity for glory and power.’¹²⁷

We do not know what was discussed between Caesar and Catullus when they had dinner, or what Caesar discussed with Catullus’ father when he visited him. It is possible that one topic was how the *amicitia* that existed between Caesar and Catullus’ father should be extended to the son; after all an invitation to dinner was a normal opening for such a friendship. It is possible that Catullus’ political ambitions were discussed, and

Caesar's support promised. That election to office followed in the later fifties, or very early forties is also a possibility that should not be dismissed. As Wiseman said: 'Even for the best-attested periods, only a minority of senators is known to us by name.'¹²⁸ There were thirty posts a year to which Catullus might aspire; twenty quaestorships and ten tribunates. There were also a very large number of new men suddenly enrolled into the senate when Caesar increased the senate to nine-hundred in 49 BC. Significantly, some of the new men were, for the first time, provincials from areas previously unrepresented: 'There had been provincial senators before, but never so many at a time, and never before men from Gaul beyond the Alps.'¹²⁹ On the basis of probability it seems unreasonable to suggest that the principal family of Verona would have lacked suitable representation when a young man of suitable age and talents was present at Rome, well-known and socialising with the élite. There is possibly even some evidence to back this probability.

Augustus's choice of those to promote to the senate was very different from that of Julius Caesar as he chose few provincials, even from Gallic Italy. The one known exception, however, was a L Valerius Catullus.¹³⁰ Furthermore, it is likely that he held the position of IIIvir monetalis in c4 AD which was unusual for a new man at this time; Wiseman shows that of forty-five known moneyers after 20 BC, only one was obviously a new man, of the others, a significant proportion held very high status such as patrician rank or gained nobility through the consulship.¹³¹ One can either view this Catullus as having a remarkably successful career, or alternatively, consider him as a successful second generation politician from an ambitious and prosperous family, following in the footsteps of his relation of the previous generation, the poet and senator Catullus. Even if this argument is not convincing – and the despondency of poem lxiv and lii are factors against it – we may still note the remarkable nature of Catullus' family and their rapid political progression.

Remarkable too has been the political nature of Catullus' poetry, when examined in the context of the Late Republic and with the Roman mindset in view. Alongside the more obviously Callimachean poetry of the epyllion and other long poems we have seen highly polished trifles about everyday events such as dinner parties and exotic perfumes, two cycles portraying love affairs, and a smattering of poems involving a range of political figures of the day, including those at the very top, with a range of tone from celebratory to the most virulently abusive. Through these poems, Catullus engaged most definitely with the highly active political life of Rome in the fifties, not just with those in the senate, but also exploiting the active political life of the people and the forum unique to his time.

This vibrant political life in the Forum was to be a relatively short-lived phenomenon, however, as such activity was not to survive the Civil Wars and the Principate of Augustus; Catullus' political role, along with that of literary friends such as Calvus, was, therefore, unique to his time, almost to the decade of the fifties when we know he was writing most of his overtly political poems. Even in his poetry we may trace a change in his attitude and stance from active engagement to disengaged despair after the death of Pompey. While it may be argued that in his long narrative poem, lxiv, Catullus pre-empted some of Virgil's prevarication, Catullus had already openly and unequivocally libelled one of Rome's key leaders in the most abusive manner possible. Propertius and the elegists lived in a completely different political environment, where the overtly political voice of poetry was hushed. Not even for Catullus' younger friend Pollio was there the same freedom to address the second Caesar: *non est enim facile in eum scribere qui potest proscribere* ('It is no light matter to write poems against a man who can proscribe you').¹³² As I have discussed in this chapter, it was not without risks for Catullus, but he still dared to do this, and given such bravery, this political voice should be heard.

Endnotes

¹ Epstein (1987, 1).

² Epstein (1987, 1).

³ The unknowns are: Aemilius, Aquinius, Aurelius, Balbus & son, Caecilius, Caesius, Camerius, Cornelius, Flavius, Gallus, Iuventius, Postumius, Quintius, Ravidus, Septimius, Silo, Suffenus, Sulla, Tappo, Thallos, Vibennius & son, Victius, Victor, and Volusius.

⁴ Poem liv 6f *irascere iterum meis iambis / immerentibus, unice imperator* (Trans. Lee 1991).

⁵ Poem lvii 1 and 10: *pulcre convenit improbis cinaedis*.

⁶ For example, there are early 1st Century BC green slate heads of Julius Caesar in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin (pictured in Southern 2001, 53) and the Uffizi Museum, Florence.

⁷ Trans. Lee (1991).

⁸ Skinner (1976b, 112f).

⁹ Suetonius *Iul.* 49: *Bithynia quicquid / et pedicator Caesaris umquam habuit* ('Whatever Bithynia had and the man who buggered Caesar').

¹⁰ Smith (1951, 172).

¹¹ Cf Edwards (1993, 26): 'Accusations of immorality were a fundamental part of the political vocabulary of the élite in ancient Rome.'

¹² Vinson (1992, 165).

¹³ Dio 43.43.1 and Plutarch *Caes.* 4.4.

¹⁴ Calvus Fr 18 Courtney= Schol. Juv.9.133 (Wray 2001, 60).

¹⁵ Suetonius *Iul.* 9.2-3; 49.1; 50.1; 52.3.

¹⁶ Cf Cicero's use of vice to denigrate character. Edwards (1993, 25): 'Cicero accuses his opponents of a wide range of vices which appear to bear little relation to the question ostensibly at issue in a particular dispute.'

¹⁷ Edwards (1993, 11). Cf Millar (1998, 139) 'Behind the personal abuse lies the real importance held for the public life of the Forum by the image and style (both in appearance and in manner of speech) of the major actors.'

¹⁸ Sallust *Cat.* 14.2.

¹⁹ Catullus himself may suit the description given by Cicero of those who supported Catiline; Cicero *Att.* 1. 14. 3 *concurabant barbatuli iuvenes, totus ille grex Catilinae duce filiola Curionis* ('there was a flocking together of our goateed young bloods, the whole Catilinarian gang with little Miss Curio at their head.' Trans. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb). The reference to beards, as Shackleton Bailey's note makes clear, is not to barbarians but to the use of the beard as a fashion accessory.

²⁰ Edwards (1993, 20).

²¹ Plutarch *Caes.* 22.3; *Cato* 51.1-4; Suetonius *Iul.* 24.3; Appian *Celt.* 18.

²² Gruen (1974, 75).

²³ Earl (1967, 14f).

²⁴ Welch (1998, ix).

²⁵ Taylor (1949, 145).

²⁶ Suetonius *Iul.* 49.

²⁷ Cicero *Att.* 2.20.4; 2.21.3-5.

²⁸ Cicero (*Qf* 2.3.2).

²⁹ Dixon (2001, 139).

³⁰ Cf Wray (2001, 189): 'That Poem 116 programmatically announces Catullus' ability to perform in two very different poetic modes, presented as "deliberately contrasted alternatives" [Macleod 1973, 305] has seemed evident to many readers of the poem. Further to call the hypermasculine and aggressive mode threatened in Poem 116 and performed in earlier Gellius poems "Archilochean" (in the sense of code model, at the very least) and "iambic" (in the sense that Catullus himself gives the word) hardly seems overbold.'

³¹ Poem vi speaks of wishing to immortalise in verse Flavius and his love, while xii threatens Marrucine Asinius with hendecasyllables and in poem xl, Catullus' iambi will make Ravidus infamous as his punishment.

³² Edwards (1993, 180); *Digest* 27.10.1. pr. Ulpian.

³³ Vinson (1992, 165f).

³⁴ Wray (2001, 147f).

³⁵ As Wray (2001, 127) in discussing Catullan aggression, pointed out, such poems as xxxiii, against the bath thieves, Vibennius and son, 'offer no foothold for a critical saving of the appearances by positing "ironic self-awareness."''

³⁶ Gruen (1974, 386).

³⁷ Gruen (1974, 386, discussion p254f)

³⁸ Caesar was governor of Further Spain after his praetorship in 61 and was awarded a triumph for conquering Lusitania (modern Portugal).

³⁹ Horace *Odes* 3.5.1-4.

⁴⁰ Poem lii is an attack on Vatinius and Nonius, portrayed as unworthy candidates for political office.

⁴¹ Wray (2001, 74).

⁴² The links mentioned are important for our understanding of poem xvi, and there may be further links between these poems (lii, lvii and xvi) and poem xi which also happens to mention both Furius and Caesar. The themes of the poems are inter-related: poem xvi abuses Furius and Aurelius as pathic, sexually perverted men, lvii abuses Caesar and Mamurra as pathic, mentally perverted men, while poem xi abuses Lesbia as a hyper-sexual, monster-woman. We have therefore four poems, two overtly political (lii and lvii), one of which is directly about Caesar, the other indirectly, another poem linked verbally and structurally but not overtly political (xvi), but which concerns two men who are also mentioned in another poem (xi) which also mentions Caesar. As mentioned in chapter 2, it is also possible that Furius of poem xi and xvi could be Furius Bibaculus, a poet accused of lampooning Caesar alongside Catullus by Tacitus. Are there further political depths to poem xvi which we can only grasp at?

⁴³ Shakespeare *King Lear* Act I, iv, 107.

⁴⁴ Suetonius *Iul.* 49: *Gallias Caesar subegit, Nicomedes Caesarem* ('Caesar conquered Gaul, Nicomedes Caesar').

⁴⁵ Edwards (1993, 27). Cf her comment (p91): 'The accusations of sexual excess made against them [men such as Caesar, Sulla, Catiline, Curio] may be seen as a way of containing the power of the most powerful men in Rome.... But at the same time their political uncontrollability was further emphasised by the stories told about their uncontrollable sexual appetites.'

⁴⁶ The figure may be 1000 *iugera*, although this is irrespective of the size of family; 250 *iugera* for each of the first two sons is nowhere mentioned in the ancient sources, as Badian (1962, 210) pointed out.

⁴⁷ How one became an equestrian, who held certain equestrian rights, and how some equestrians differed from those equestrians with the public horse (*equites equo publico*) are questions beyond the scope of this discussion. I assume here that certain aspects of equestrian status were not automatically conferred by the financial qualification alone.

⁴⁸ Actual evidence proving his senatorial status is lacking, but this is so for many senators in this era. As Wiseman (1971, 147) argues, 'For instance, can we doubt that Mamurra and Volusenus Quadratus were offered seats in Caesar's Senate?'

⁴⁹ Poem xi 10f: *Caesaris...monimenta magni...Gallicum Rhenum, horribiles vitro ultimosque Britannos*.

⁵⁰ Likewise in poem xlv, Septimius is said to prefer his Acme above all the Syrias and Britains, which means he preferred a life of love with Acme over the potential rewards of even the most ambitious military campaigns.

⁵¹ Cf Cicero *Att.* 2.19.3-4 (58 BC): he recounts how at the theatre there was great applause for the line 'to our misfortune, you are Magnus' which was seen as referring to Pompey.

⁵² Welch (1998, ix).

⁵³ Wiseman (1998, 4): 'It seems to me overwhelmingly more likely that each winter Caesar wrote up the events of the year's campaigns with the Roman people as his intended audience, and had the text sent as fast as possible to Balbus and Oppius for copying and distributing.'

⁵⁴ Wiseman (1998, 4). He quotes Cicero *De Fin.* 5.52; 'What of the pleasure that people of humble station with no expectation of a public career, or even artisans take in history.'

⁵⁵ Wiseman (1998, 5).

⁵⁶ Cicero June (?) 54 *Fam* 7.7; Sept 54 *Qf* 3.1.

⁵⁷ Epstein (1987, 5).

⁵⁸ This was an unconstitutional appointment as Pompey effectively was consul but holding proconsular *imperium* at the same time.

⁵⁹ His father, C Licinius Macer, had been a tribune and active as a *popularis* in 73 BC.

⁶⁰ Caesar *BG* 7.4f; *BG* 7.6.

⁶¹ Gruen (1974, 453); Suetonius *Iul.* 83.1.

⁶² Gruen (1974, 457).

⁶³ Wray (2001, 171): 'bitterer cups filled with the unmitigated wine of manly aggression.' Cf Wiseman (1967, 7f).

⁶⁴ Gold (1987, 63).

⁶⁵ Wray (2001, 176).

⁶⁶ Wray (2001, 171).

⁶⁷ Wray (2001, 171).

⁶⁸ Just as in Callimachus, we need to be prepared for layers of meaning, challenges in interpreting tone, and possible irony; Janan (1984, 5) says of Callimachus: 'his scholarly subtlety often shades off into something less august and more wickedly playful. He regularly challenges his audience to exercise their wits upon how to take what he says: is he speaking comedy? tragedy? or that maddeningly ungraspable mediate entity, irony?'

⁶⁹ Nappa (2001, 104).

⁷⁰ Nappa (2001, 105).

⁷¹ Vinson (1992, 169). The transformations she discusses are firstly the use of *irrumare* in a metaphorical sense and secondly the fact that Catullus casts himself as a victim rather than an aggressor retaliating by his invective.

⁷² Scullard (1982, 121).

⁷³ Seager (in his introduction to Plutarch *Fall of the Roman Republic* Penguin 1972, 13). Plutarch *Marius* 8 describes how when Marius sought leave to seek the consulship, Caecilius Metellus Numidicus arrogantly suggested that Marius wait until he could stand with Metellus' son, a far younger man.

⁷⁴ Skinner (1980, 141).

⁷⁵ Nappa (2001, 102).

⁷⁶ It is possible that Porcius is C Porcius Cato, tribune of 56 and supportive of Caesar. This would fit with Catullus' negative attitude towards him in this poem. By 54, Calvus at least had been reconciled with him as he defended him, alongside Cicero. Socraton ('Imitation Socrates') may refer to Philodemus, an Epicurean scholar-poet who was a protégé of Caesar's father-in-law, the man identified with Catullus' Piso. The evidence is far from conclusive, however.

⁷⁷ Reactions to literature can be very different depending on viewpoint and received symbolism, and this is easily forgotten in our rather homogenised Western culture: at a showing of *Schindler's List* in Bophuthatswana, now part of South Africa, in 1993, the audience laughed throughout.

⁷⁸ Nappa (2001, 103).

⁷⁹ In poem xxxv, Catullus addresses his papyrus which contains a message for Caecilius and in poem xlii, he wants his *codicilli* back.

⁸⁰ Cicero *Vat.* 11.

⁸¹ Cicero *Vat.* 4. He also mentions Vatinius' hopes of two consulships (*Vat.* 11).

⁸² Cicero (*Att.* 4.8.2) speaks of the list of future consuls drawn up at the conference at Luca: *paginulae futurorum consulum*.

⁸³ Calvus was probably also involved in the earlier prosecution; Tacitus (*Dial.* 34.7) says that Calvus first prosecuted Vatinius when he was just over twenty-two and according to Pliny's date of birth of 82 BC (*NH* 7.165), Calvus would have been twenty-three or twenty-four in 58BC.

⁸⁴ Cf Frank (1928, 40).

⁸⁵ For example, both men defended C Porcius Cato and C Messius in 54.

⁸⁶ Torquatus is the subject of the long poem celebrating his marriage (lxi), while Hortalus receives poem lxvi, the translation of Callimachus, with the dedicatory poem lxv.

⁸⁷ Cf Tatum (1988, 179f); McDermott (1980, 75f).

⁸⁸ Cicero *Att.* 7.2.1 (50 BC); *Tusc.* 3.45 (45 BC).

⁸⁹ Gruen (1974, 331).

⁹⁰ Gruen (1974, 287f; 311f; 443f).

⁹¹ Gruen (1974, 443).

⁹² Gruen (1974, 451): 'Friends of both men [Pompey and Crassus], ex-magistrates of 55, were in the dock almost without cease in that year.'

⁹³ Gruen (1974, 451): 'The Roman electorate again showed itself impervious to the desires of the triumvirate.'

⁹⁴ He had served with Pompey as quaestor in the sixties and supported him strongly in 56, for example, backing the resolution to appoint Pompey to Egypt.

⁹⁵ The point about curule office is that it gave the holder (aedile, praetor or consul) certain rights within the senatorial body – the *ius imaginum* and arguably a diluted form of *nobilitas* (curule office was probably the criterion for *nobilitas* until the number of praetors was increased in the third and second centuries BC).

⁹⁶ Calvus was dead when Cicero wrote *Brutus* in 46 BC (*Brut.* 81.279).

⁹⁷ Cf Millar (1998, 125): 'It was in the open air, in the Forum, that the decisive political confrontations, and the decisive votes, took place.'

⁹⁸ Millar (1998, 34f).

⁹⁹ Tatum (1993, 193): 'On 3 November armed men disrupted the rebuilding of Cicero's *domus* as well as the *porticus Catuli*. They then set themselves to attacking the house of Cicero's brother. On the eleventh,

Clodius and his gangs actually ambushed the orator on the *via sacra*.... The next day Clodius launched a daylight raid against Milo's house in the Cermalus.'

¹⁰⁰ Burl (2004, 109).

¹⁰¹ There seems to have been a good deal of restraint in Caesar's dealings with those who impugned his reputation. Suetonius gives various examples of his liberality; for example he mentions (lxxv) how Caesar 'good naturedly took no action either against A Caecina for his most libellous pamphlet, or against Pitholaus for his scurrilous verses.' He sought reconciliation with Calvus (lxxiii) and refrained from giving evidence against Clodius, his wife's possible seducer, at the Bona Dea trial (lxxiv).

¹⁰² Gruen (1974, 267).

¹⁰³ Cicero (*Rep* 4.12): *si quis occentauiisset siue Carmen condidisset, quod infamiam faceret flagitium alteri.* ('if any person either sang or composed a song which slandered or insulted anyone else.')

¹⁰⁴ Wray (2001, 59f).

¹⁰⁵ Wray (2001, 126) points out how the nineteenth century saw the 'criminalization of (largely male) aggression' with physical aggression 'an almost exclusive legal monopoly of the state.' This was very much the opposite in Rome, where there was no state police force and physical safety was a private affair.

¹⁰⁶ Gruen (1974, 433f).

¹⁰⁷ Millar (1998, 93).

¹⁰⁸ Epstein (1987, 73f).

¹⁰⁹ Wray (2001, 59f).

¹¹⁰ Jones, T. (2003) *Who Murdered Chaucer?* Methuen.

¹¹¹ Tacitus *Ann.* 1.72.

¹¹² Edwards (1993 27). See also Syme (1939, 459-75).

¹¹³ Dixon (2001, 150).

¹¹⁴ Edwards (1993, 4; 12).

¹¹⁵ Millar (1998, 28f).

¹¹⁶ This shows a leap from 400 000 in the late 2nd century, and so probably includes the new citizens resulting from the social war. Brunt's *Italian Manpower* (charts 13-14 and discussion in chapters 7 and 8) provides the figures and basis for Millar's argument.

¹¹⁷ Millar (1998, 32). 'It is certain at any rate that in the middle and latter part of the first century, corn or cash could be distributed to vast numbers who counted as belonging to the *plebs urbana* of Rome, numbers that at the maximum approximated to one-third of the total number of Roman citizens as listed in the census of 70.' As to who qualified Millar states that we have no evidence for geographical boundaries for entitlement.

¹¹⁸ Millar (1998, 33).

¹¹⁹ Millar (1998, 95).

¹²⁰ Millar (1998, 95).

¹²¹ Millar (1998, 125): 'The issues concerned the disposition of the empire, the use of the massive revenues accruing from it, and the prospects for future military glory.'

¹²² Earl (1967, 54) gives a good definition for optimates and *populares*: 'There were in the Roman state, in theory at least, two principles of authority: the *libertas* of a supposedly sovereign People and the *auctoritas* of the Senate. The Populares used and appealed to the former, the Optimates to the latter.'

¹²³ Wiseman 1971, 118.

¹²⁴ Earl (1967, 53): 'Sallust, however, accepted that of all the works that *ingenium* could achieve the highest was the service of the state, with the writing of history a poor second.'

¹²⁵ Edwards (1993, 23). Cf Earl (1967, 23): 'All social standing and position were obtainable only through the service of the Republic. In this tradition terms denoting laziness, such as *ignavia* and *inertia*, have a sharp and definite connotation: refusal to play a part in politics.'

¹²⁶ We might compare Scipio Aemilianus who was criticised in his early career for preparing the way to electoral success in an unusual manner. As Earl (1967, 38) points out: 'The complaints against him were based on his divergence from the duties it [seeking election] imposed and his subsequent actions were devoted to making himself worthy of it. Scipio agreed with his contemporaries about the end to be reached. He differed from them only in the way in which he was to reach this end. They reached it by the traditional path of speaking in the law-courts.'

¹²⁷ Epstein (1987, 9).

¹²⁸ Wiseman (1971, 5). He also makes the point (p147): 'Many men whose careers we label 'equestrian' may have had ambitions of the *curia* which were not fulfilled, or of the fulfilment of which we hear nothing.'

¹²⁹ Wiseman (1971, 8).

¹³⁰ Wiseman (1971, 12): 'But of provincial senators like those of Caesar there is no sign, and even Gallic Italy is barely represented.'

¹³¹ Wiseman (1971, 12). He comments that of the forty-five, at least twelve became consuls and fourteen were patrician. This situation was very different to earlier practice, before 20 BC, when new men often held the office.

¹³² Macrob. *Sat.* 2.4.21. Trans. Edwards (1993, 62).

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- Abbreviations of journals used are as follows:

<i>AC</i>	Antiquité Classique
<i>ACD</i>	Acta Classica (Debrecen)
<i>AJAH</i>	American Journal of Ancient History
<i>AJP</i>	American Journal of Philology
<i>ANRW</i>	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
<i>BICS</i>	Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies
<i>CB</i>	Classical Bulletin
<i>CJ</i>	Classical Journal
<i>C&M</i>	Classica et Mediaevalia
<i>CP</i>	Classical Philology
<i>CQ</i>	Classical Quarterly
<i>CR</i>	Classical Review
<i>CW</i>	Classical World
<i>EMC</i>	Echoes du monde classique
<i>G&R</i>	Greece and Rome
<i>GRBS</i>	Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies
<i>HSCP</i>	Harvard Studies in Classical Philology
<i>JRS</i>	Journal of Roman Studies
<i>LCM</i>	Liverpool Classical Monthly
<i>MD</i>	Materiali e Discussioni
<i>PACA</i>	Proceedings of the African Classical Associations
<i>PBSR</i>	Papers of the British School at Rome
<i>PCPS</i>	Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society
<i>PVS</i>	Proceedings of the Virgil Society
<i>RPh</i>	Revue de Philologie
<i>TAPA</i>	Transactions of the American Philological Association
<i>WS</i>	Weiner Studien
<i>YCS</i>	Yale Classical Studies

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